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POLICE REFORM WEIGHING THE COSTS

PAGE 3



Illustration by Jon Williams, Real Change

GRAVITY OF ABUSE CHAPTER THREE

As Richard serves time for a domestic violence assault, Brandy moves into a safe house with their newborn son. But when Richard's sentence ends, and he moves back in with his family, Brandy's calm world disintegrates Page 5

GRAVITY OF ABUSE

FREE SPEECH ISN'T FREE | If you value the stories you get in Real Change, please take a moment today to support the spring fund drive. With just two weeks left to the drive and, with \$90,000 raised so far, we are less than halfway to reaching our critical \$150,000 goal. Visit realchangenews.org to make a secure online donation, or send your tax-deductible gift to 219 1st Ave. S., Ste., 220, Seattle, WA 98104. Your support of our work makes all the difference.



This is the third installment in the four-part series "Gravity of Abuse," which examines how domestic violence and substance abuse affect the life of a family and the people around them. The final installment will run May 30.

Brandy Sweeney spent the last weeks of her pregnancy in a Seattle motel after her partner and the child's father, Richard Duncan, was arrested for domestic violence assault. On September 30, 2009, she gave birth to Ian, then entered a safe house. Her whereabouts were a secret.

Photo by Kate Baldwin

A family reconnects; the violence continues

By **ROSETTE ROYALE**, Assistant Editor | Photography by **KATE BALDWIN**

Chapter Three

NO CONTACT

Safe house

What if no one showed up?

In early October 2009, Brandy Sweeney stood outside a grocery store in an unfamiliar neighborhood, her belongings gathered around her feet, her three-day-old son cradled in her arms. Someone was supposed to meet her there and drive her to a safe place, but the person hadn't arrived. So she waited. Two minutes, three minutes, four.

As customers walked by, Brandy searched their faces. *Is that them?* No one approached her. Maybe the person was late. So she waited. Five minutes, six, seven.

Standing in the parking lot, Brandy watched the sunlight drain out of the afternoon sky, felt a damp cold infuse the autumn air. Eight minutes, nine, 10. *What if the person forgot?*

Several days before, after giving birth to her son, Ian, she'd been accepted into the Eastside Domestic Violence Program. Known as EDVP, the program operates two safe houses for people fleeing violent relationships. During her pregnancy, she'd lived with Ian's father, Richard Duncan, in a smelly, chaotic motel in Seattle. He drank, she yelled, they fought, their arguments dragging them into violent clashes throughout the summer.

Then, on August 22, 2009, after a flurry of punching and scratching and shoving, Brandy, nearly eight months pregnant, suffered a black eye and fractured foot. Police hauled Richard to jail, while Brandy spent the last weeks of her pregnancy in the motel scrambling to find stable housing. Her search ended on September 30, 2009, the day she gave birth to Ian, when she received word

there was space at the safe house.

Except she didn't know where it was. EDVP keeps its shelter addresses secret, to protect the women and their children from vengeful boyfriends and fathers. Brandy left the hospital on October 2 and took a cab, while Ian screamed his head off. The cab driver brought her to a grocery store, a drop-off point. A safe house staff member would ferry her the rest of the way.

So Brandy waited. Fifteen minutes, 20, 30 — and still, no one came. She wasn't prepared to be outside in the cold with a newborn. Without a phone, she couldn't call program staff. What if she was at the wrong spot? Brandy saw her life heading down the toilet. "Because that's where it was at that point," she remembers. "I had nothing going for me."

Then a woman walked out of the

store. She carried something: a blanket. The woman handed it to Brandy. She burst into tears as she wrapped Ian in the blanket.

Do you want to use my phone? the woman asked.

Yes, said Brandy. She called EDVP.

Oh, said the person who answered. We didn't know you were going to be there now. We thought later this afternoon.

I'm here, Brandy said. You need to come get me.

Brandy passed back the woman's phone and thanked her. The woman smiled, walked to her car and drove away. She never told Brandy her name.

Moments later, an EDVP staff member pulled up, apologizing. She helped Brandy and Ian settle in the car, and

See GRAVITY, Continued on Page 6

May 9: Chapter One HONEYMOON PHASE

Brandy and Richard battle substance abuse — and confront domestic violence — as they move from Boise, Idaho, to Seattle

May 16: Chapter Two NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

A motel provides a not-so-safe haven as pregnancy and violence complicate Brandy and Richard's relationship.

May 23: Chapter Three NO CONTACT

A court order demands Brandy and Richard, new parents, must stay apart. But the pair reunites with violent results

May 30: Chapter Four THREE STRIKES

An arrest for assault sends Richard to jail and places Brandy on the witness stand. Will the jury find him guilty?

GRAVITY OF ABUSE

Women account for 85 percent of those abused in violent relationships, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics

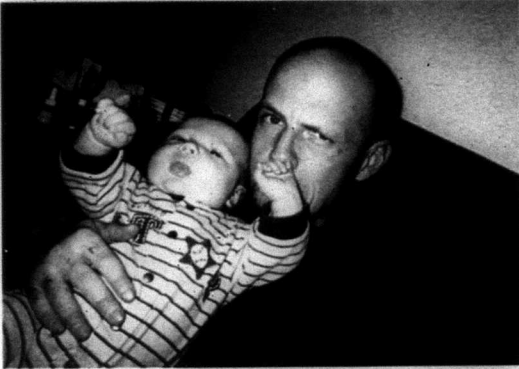


Photo courtesy of Brandy Sweeney

Richard was in the King County Jail when Ian was born. After being released, Richard loved playing games with his son.

GRAVITY, Continued from Page 5

off they went, her son swaddled in a stranger's blanket as they rode to a place where everyone would be a stranger.

My Friend's Place and My Sister's Home: Those are the names EDVP gave its emergency shelters, both meant to act as screens. Say a mother and child moved into a shelter, and the child's schoolmate asked, "Where do you live?" The child, in all honesty, could reply, "My Friend's Place," without revealing his abusive home life or secret location.

The staff member parked in front of My Friend's Place, then gave Brandy a tour. The building was divided into a North House and South House, with five women, some with children and some without, living in each section. Downstairs, two resident rooms, a family room, a laundry, a shared bathroom. Upstairs, a living room, a kitchen, more resident spaces, another bathroom.

Brandy's room, downstairs, contained a twin bed, dresser, nightstand and TV, all squeezed in a small space. She holed up inside, breastfeeding Ian. She wanted to stay there forever and sort out her life, but staff prodded her to meet other residents. Reluctantly, she left her sanctuary.

Brandy, 27, shared little about her life with the other women. They hardly knew about Richard, how he sat in the King County Jail serving 120 days for assault in the fourth degree. Or how the court had issued a no-contact order that barred him from coming within 500 feet of Brandy or communicating through email, texts, voicemail and more, for two years. Or how, by Thanksgiving, he'd be released.

That no-contact order, issued by the Seattle Municipal Court, forbade Richard from contacting Brandy, but it didn't prohibit her from reaching him. Days before giving birth to Ian, Brandy sought to lift the order in hopes Richard could see his son after his release. A judge denied the request. Brandy knew Richard craved a father-son connection, so she wrote him

to share news of Ian.

Writing was her only option, since the jail didn't permit calls herself — until staff gave her a free cell phone with 1,000 pre-paid minutes. She reached out to old friends and contacted her 8-year-old daughter, Skye, who lived in Idaho. She awaited their messages through a free voicemail service that is not connected to a customer's phone number. As the days progressed, Brandy realized the life she imagined being down the toilet was now a smooth sea.

Six weeks sailed by at the safe house with nary a ripple. One day in mid-October, Brandy checked her free voicemail account. A message awaited. She listened. It was Richard. He wondered where she was. And Ian? I don't know if you've got a phone number yet, he said, or if you want to talk to me, but I'm sorry.

Richard? Already? And he apologized? Brandy thought he had a right to see Ian, but ... Did she want to see Richard? No — though a little part of her did.

A little more TLC

Work release: That's where Richard was when he broke the no-contact order and called Brandy.

Run by the King County Jail, the Work-Education-Release program provides transitional residences for roughly 160 men nearing the end of their sentences. Program enrollees are chosen at sentencing and, once they enter the program, they can seek work, go to school or attend substance abuse treatment for part of the day. Then they're required to return to work release for the remainder of the day. On October 21, 2009, after he served 60 days, Richard was shuttled by jail guards into an old-school cell, complete with bars, on the tenth floor of the county courthouse.

Richard wanted to return to TLC, Trades Labor Corporation, the day-labor center where he worked prior to jail. But he needed a messenger. So he'd called Brandy's voicemail, using the work



Brandy and Richard lived in transitional housing in Renton in November 2009, even though a no-co

release pay phone. He hoped she would change her voicemail's outgoing message to include her phone number — and she did. When they spoke, Richard apologized, then asked her to check if his old boss would rehire him. His boss agreed.

When he'd first been hired at TLC, in February of that year, Richard had met Francisco Mitchell, and the two, often assigned to the same work sites, became friends. From the outside, their friendship made little sense: Richard, with his shaved head and clear blue eyes, sported a gallery of tattoos on his body, including "SKINHEAD" spelled out in blue ink across the upper fingers of both hands like brass knuckles; Francisco, with his thick accent and olive skin, had Mexican and white parents. Why in the world would a skinhead and a biracial man become buddies? For starters, Richard thought Francisco seemed like a cool dude. Plus, they both knew life on the inside, its racial divisions. So once Richard returned to his day-labor routine, he and Francisco reconnected.

Though what Richard really craved was a connection with his family, with Ian. Of course, he couldn't see them legal-

ly for two years. But he'd already broken the no-contact order by calling Brandy. Then there were the multiple times they'd spoken since then. With each new conversation, Richard became convinced of one thing: "She wanted me back."

Finding a way back in

Brandy questioned if getting back with Richard was the right move.

When she thought about him, she experienced a tug of war of emotions. Pulling on one end were memories of how nice he could be, his claims he'd protect her. He'd worked to pay for a motel so she didn't have to spend her pregnancy in a tent. Plus, she loved him. And when you love someone, you stick by his side, don't you?

But then the other end of the rope pulled. Attached to it were memories of the put downs, the insults. The stalking, the black eye, the fractured foot. The way she spent her pregnancy in tears, swearing she'd leave. "When I think about the stuff that's happened," Brandy says. "I kinda think to myself, 'Why was I there?'"

She had one answer: Ian. She thought a son should know his father. Brandy

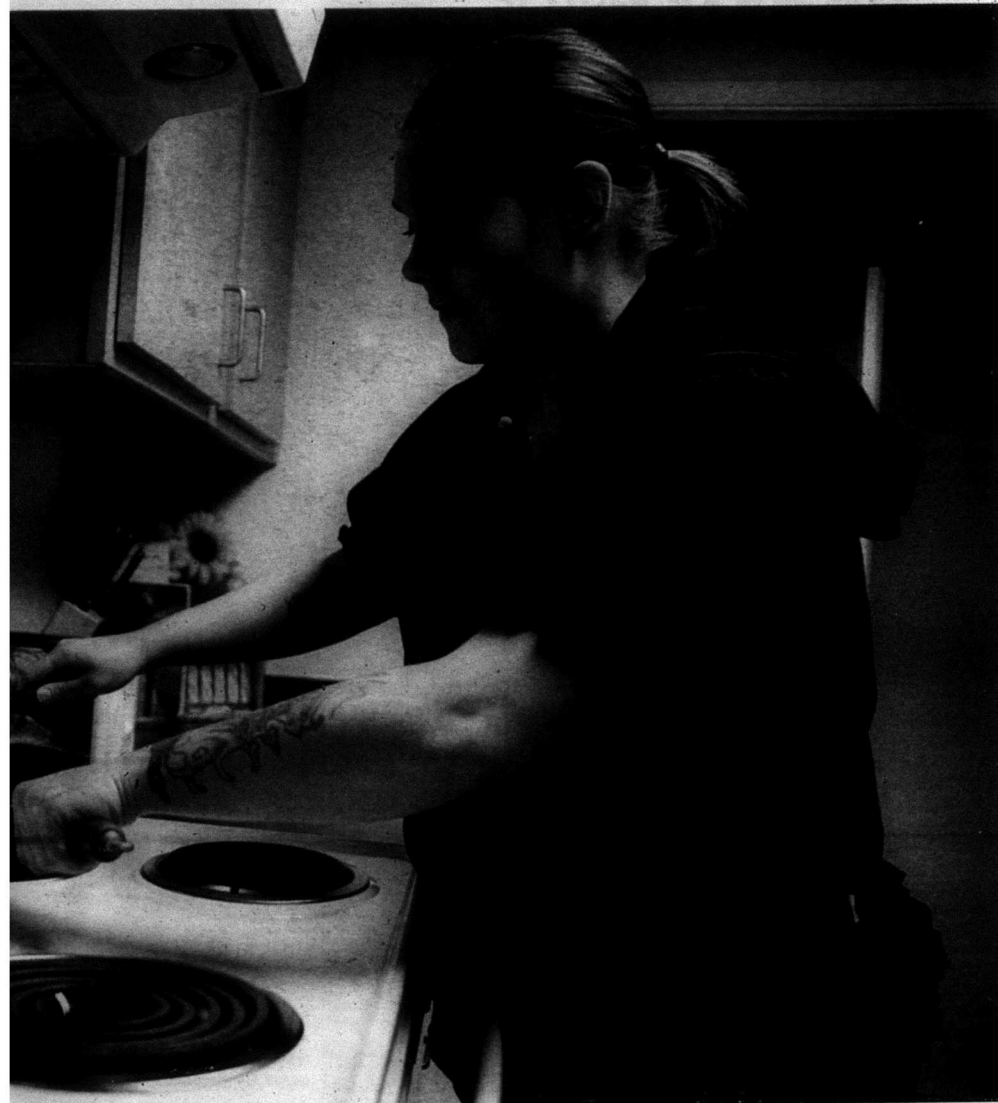


Photo by Kate Baldwin

act order barred him from communicating with her for two years. He assaulted her two days after Thanksgiving.

ORDERS OF MAGNITUDE

Washington state offers a number of civil and criminal court orders that pertain to domestic violence. These include:

No-contact order: A criminal order that can only be issued once an arrest is made in a domestic-violence related event; it can be issued at various points in the criminal proceeding; people involved must have or have had an intimate relationship.

Protection order: A civil order where a victim petitions a judge to ask for protection from another person; people involved must have or have had an intimate relationship.

Restraining order: A civil order that's tied to another family court case, for example, a divorce proceeding; people involved must have or have had an intimate relationship.

Anti-harassment order: A civil order where a victim petitions a judge to ask for protection from another person; people involved have not had an intimate relationship, for example, neighbors.

Source: Wash. State Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Don't you fucking tell the cops anything, he yelled. The officer, seated in a chair near Brandy, heard every word. While he screamed, Brandy's body shook. She hung up.

When the officer asked if Brandy would sign a written statement, Brandy was too scared. If I cooperate with you, she said, Richard might get more violent.

The police dispatched a K9 squad to search for Richard. No luck. Concerned about Brandy's safety, the officer contacted a Way Back Inn employee, who moved Brandy and Ian into a motel. As she prepared to settle in for the night, her phone rang again: Richard.

I'm sorry, he said. I won't do it again. Promise. I just want to be with you and Ian.

I don't want to be with you, Brandy said. Which was true. For the moment. But Richard insisted, sweetly, they should be together. When Brandy considered how he had moved out to Renton, where he didn't know anyone, to start a family, she felt responsible. His words raised doubts she could care for Ian alone. With Richard around, wouldn't it be easier? "And I thought if I loved him enough," she recalls, "he'd change."

Richard swore he would. Honestly. She told him the motel's address. A little while later, he knocked. Brandy let him in. And hours after the assault, they were together again.

Days later, Brandy returned to the duplex. Aiming to protect her from Richard, program staff secured another space, further south, in Tukwila. No one at Way Back Inn ever knew Richard followed her to the new apartment. He moved in.

But the crying. Ian wouldn't quit crying. Richard knew that's what babies did, but still. "If you're not used to it," Richard says, "there's no getting used to it." Add to that another fight — again Brandy holding Ian, again Richard pushing her, again Brandy falling, again Ian safe —

See GRAVITY, Continued on Page 8

reminded herself that even if Richard did horrible things, he wasn't a horrible person. So after speaking to Richard in work release, after hearing his apologies and his promises that he'd change, she felt the rope tug. Yes, she'd try again.

But before Richard finished his stint in work release on November 9, Brandy had already moved from the safe house into a two-bedroom duplex in Renton. She'd found the place through Way Back Inn, a transitional housing program that assisted homeless families. Before Brandy gave Richard the address, she laid down a ground rule: no drinking. Then she counted the days before his arrival.

Richard was still mad he'd been arrested for assaulting Brandy, so when he arrived at the door, he didn't know whether to hug her or yell at her. He settled for a hug.

The pair made small talk, and Brandy was surprised: Richard was so nice, caring. It brought back old times. Richard went to see Ian, rousing his son so he could hold him for the first time. Startled, Ian crumpled his six-week-old face into a grimace and bawled. Richard wept, too.

Father and son, together, in tears.

Brandy sensed what a good dad Richard might become. Even though she couldn't shake an uncomfortable feeling, an intuition that raised a small red flag, she told Richard he could stay. "I just really wanted to make it work," Brandy says.

Besides, Thanksgiving wasn't far off, and, with the family together, maybe they'd feel thankful. Things worked out for the first couple of weeks, but the holiday was a bust: Richard ate the turkey Brandy roasted, then drank, a violation of the no-drinking condition, until he passed out. The situation worsened two days later, November 28. Black Saturday.

Richard started the day with a few caffeinated malt beverages. During the late afternoon, he purchased more. He tilted back can after can. Tired and a little drunk, Richard stumbled to bed.

For nine months, Brandy had been sober. Beer and meth lay in the past. But with Richard drinking in the duplex, she couldn't resist the urge. She downed a malt beverage, too. Wide awake, a little intoxicated and in the mood to hear music, Brandy searched for a station.

She cranked up the volume.

The noise woke up Richard. Shut the fuck up, he screamed.

Brandy walked into the bedroom. You shut up, she told him, then she returned to Ian in the living room.

Richard stomped over to her. Brandy punched him. He slapped her. Brandy, with Ian in her arms, glared at Richard. Why'd you do that? she asked.

You shouldn't have punched me, he said.

Get out, she said.

Brandy, still holding Ian, stood near the door. In a flash of anger, Richard pushed her. Brandy almost fell, but caught herself and Ian. Richard stormed out.

That's when Brandy got scared. She could defend herself, but Ian? True, Richard had never harmed his son since he'd moved in, but Brandy felt compelled to protect the child — and herself. So she called the police.

A female officer from the Renton Police Department showed up minutes later. She questioned Brandy, who, crying, tried to explain the fight. Then her phone rang. It was Richard.

GRAVITY OF ABUSE

Instead of asking, "Why does she take him back?" those who work with women in violent relationships suggest another question: "Why does he abuse her?" according to "Why Does He Do That?" by Lundy Bancroft

GRAVITY, Continued from Page 7

and Richard decided he had to get away. He'd go to Boise, where they first met. Brandy welcomed the breathing space. So they bought him a bus ticket, and the pair said goodbye.

Richard figured it was their last goodbye, because he had no intention of returning to Seattle. Sure, he cared for his family, but the crying, the nagging, the fighting — good riddance. He swore he'd never come back.

But never, it doesn't always last forever. Sometimes, it lasts only a few weeks. So Richard, after barely a month in Idaho, made another decision: He'd try it one last time with Brandy.

One coincidence after another

With Richard gone most of January 2010, Brandy enjoyed the quiet. Ian had turned three months old. A new year, a new start — broken by an old pattern: Richard returned.

Strapped for cash, he went back to TLC. He landed a job at a construction site in south Seattle, a partially built residential complex containing 351 luxury apartments called the Station at Othello Park. Richard rode the bus, and Brandy often met him in the late afternoon at the TLC office. Sometimes they went out for Mexican and had a beer. Then they bused home, mother, father and child. A family.

But the transitional housing at Way Back Inn only lasted three months, so the search for a place to live began anew. As February approached, Brandy heard from Hope Place, a shelter run by the Union Gospel Mission that served roughly 80 female-run households. The shelter took boys up to 18, but no adult males. That would force Brandy and Richard to separate.

Or maybe not, because Hope Place stood in all its five-story glory on a recently developed tract of land on South Othello Street. Walk three blocks due east, and you'd be standing in front of a squat, gray apartment building. Directly across the street was the Station at Othello Park, Richard's new workplace.

The day Brandy and Ian moved into Hope Place, Richard, by then 37, had nowhere to live. He worked his shift, met Brandy afterward, then walked to a church near the construction site to camp out for the evening. He curled up in a sleeping bag, but it offered little protection from the rain. Drenched, he barely slept at all.

When Francisco Mitchell, Richard's work buddy, showed up the next day, he noticed Richard looked a little rough around the edges. He asked why.

I'm homeless, Richard said.

Francisco could relate. Not long after meeting Richard the year before, Francisco had spent nights in a shelter. If a friend hadn't rented him a room in an apartment in Everett, 30 miles north of Seattle, who knew where he'd be now.

You can come stay with me, Francisco said.

Cool, Richard said.

And like that, a skinhead and a biracial man became roommates.

One day, two police officers showed up at Hope Place to talk to Brandy.



Richard had missed a court date for a domestic violence review. Had she seen Richard James Duncan? No, she said. Did she know where he was? No.

On one level, her answers were lies, but on another, they were part of a strategy. If she told police Richard worked three blocks away, he'd become angry, and he'd be arrested. When he got out of jail, he'd be even more angry. Lying was her way to stay safe.

Brandy and Ian ate lunch with Richard almost every workday. On weekends, she and Ian would venture to Everett to hang out. Because of the no-contact order, they kept their meetings quiet. Because Richard had missed the court date, the court had issued a \$25,000 warrant for his arrest. Richard knew the police would catch him, one day.

During the week, Richard and Francisco followed a routine. "We just drank a couple beers after work," remembers Francisco, "because we had to get up early in the morning." Taking buses to and from Everett, they endured long commutes, sometimes two hours each way. "It sucked," says Richard.

But not for long. Francisco's original roommate got a new job that required he move and give up the Everett apartment. Francisco and Richard needed to find somewhere new. With the long commute, Francisco wanted to live closer to work, so he asked his boss for ideas. His boss talked to someone who owned an apartment building in Seattle. Yes, there was a two-bedroom opening up close to work. Actually, it was in the gray building right across the street from the Station at Othello Park.

Francisco jumped at it. So did Richard, who'd be his roomie. But Richard had a long felony record from Nevada, so the landlord wouldn't put Richard's name on the lease. They needed someone else: Brandy.

Richard pitched the idea. We'll all be together, he said, and you can leave Hope Place. "It sounded good, in theory," Brandy recalls. But live together

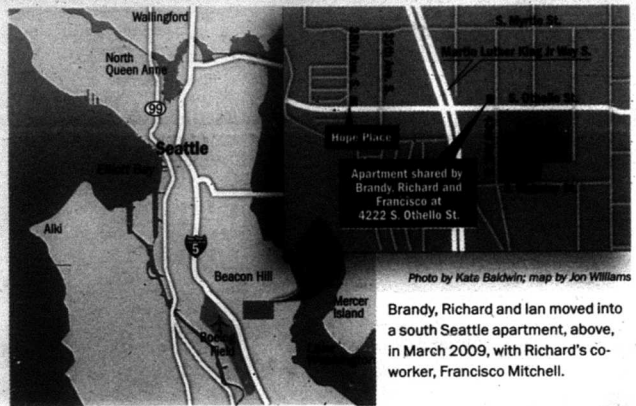


Photo by Kate Bakwin; map by Jon Williams

Brandy, Richard and Ian moved into a south Seattle apartment, above, in March 2009, with Richard's co-worker, Francisco Mitchell.

again? Doubts consumed her. Richard convinced her the violence would be over. She signed her name. On March 1, 2010, Brandy, Richard, Ian and Francisco moved into 4222 S. Othello St., into Apartment 21.

Within two months, their attempt at a happy home life would come to an end.

Apartment 21

In the apartment, March came in like a lamb and stayed that way. For a while.

The front door opened onto a hallway with a bedroom to the left — that's where Brandy, Richard and Ian stayed — and a bathroom. The hall turned right, with another bedroom on the left, for Francisco, before leading to the living room. Off to the right, the kitchen. A wall jack provided Internet but no phone service.

Richard and Francisco left for work by 6 a.m. Along with caring for the five-month-old Ian, Brandy handled domestic duties. Sometimes Richard came home for lunch. Around 5 p.m., he and Francisco returned. Brandy cooked.

Some evenings, Richard would hold Ian on his lap, dancing his infant body to "The Gummy Bear Song," a short, animated YouTube video of a singing, break-dancing neon green piece of candy.

Richard and Francisco read copies of "WWII History," a magazine extolling the German military. On nice days, Brandy strolled Ian around a nearby park. A calm home life. But around the end of March, the internal climate changed.

The drinking seemed to shift it. True, Richard and Brandy had drunk before, but Francisco noticed that, more and more, their drinking led to arguments. He might have a lady friend over, and Brandy and Richard would bicker "over little things and for nothing," Francisco recalls. At least Richard never hit Brandy, not that he saw.

But storms brewed in their bedroom. Richard threw things at Brandy: books, shoes, diaper boxes. It didn't matter. Brandy, feeling mother bear energy, fought back. She had a kid to protect. Though she was nowhere near as strong as Richard, Brandy hit and punched him. The thought of being intimate held little interest for her, so she created a barrier to the bedroom: "I locked him out." But Richard worked at a construction site, so he borrowed tools removed the door-knob. She still wouldn't let him touch her.

As April progressed, the situation dete-

GRAVITY, Continued from Page 8

riorated. Drinking every day. Yelling every day. Fighting every day. No one saw a way out. Brandy and Francisco had signed a lease, and Richard and Francisco had to cover the \$1,050 rent, plus finish paying the security deposit. Everyone had to pitch in. Brandy, for her part, dreamed of taking Ian and leaving Richard.

Not having extra cash stifled that dream, though she knew Richard kept rent money in a drawer in the living room. One day she took some money and stayed with Ian in a motel room for the night. She called a shelter to ask if it had space. A staff member told her yes, but it was so far away, Brandy worried she'd feel isolated. So the next day, she returned to Apartment 21. She figured if she left and Richard found her, she'd be pulled into the middle of another violent confrontation.

And that was something she didn't want to imagine.

Middle man

As Francisco sat in a seedy, downtown restaurant-bar on April 29, 2010, he found himself in the middle of another situation.

This feeling of being caught in the middle grew out of his youth. With one Mexican and one white parent, young Francisco Chavez Mitchell spent his childhood in Southern California caught between Mexicanos and Anglos. The middle ground became more troubling when, at six, his father died. His mother remarried, and Francisco's stepdad abused her. Unable to stop the violence as a youth, Francisco swore, when he grew up, he would never hit a woman or allow another man to, either.

But as a young adult, he had other woes: Cocaine and crack addiction led to an assault with a deadly weapon charge. He landed in the California Institution for Men.

Inside, inmates drew clear divisions along racial lines. White, black, Mexican, and within these groups, even more subdivisions. Not declaring your allegiance to one group left you a target. "They do a lot of bad things to you," he remembers. Because Francisco wasn't 100 percent Mexican, he couldn't run with them. Same with the whites. He fell in with the Chicanos, U.S. citizens of Mexican descent.

Since the Chicanos tended to speak English, the white supremacists mostly left them alone. A few even befriended Francisco. One told him he'd only joined for protection. When Francisco left prison, he ran into the guy, and they hung out, became friends. It taught Francisco that someone's tattoos or actions on the inside didn't predict how the person would behave on the outside.

And Francisco wanted to be a better person on the outside, so after rehab in Cali, he wound his way to Seattle. He worked as a bilingual translator for a while, finally landing at TLC. He remembered that at a job site in February 2009, a new guy, white, showed up. Along with a shaved head and scraggly beard, the white guy had, tattooed near his left eye, a pair of S-shaped lightning bolts for "SS," Hitler's elite defense corps. Spelled out on the upper portions of his fingers, another tattoo read "SKINHEAD." The guy, Richard, and Francisco talked. Both had spent times in shelters. As for the tattoos: so what?

See GRAVITY, Continued on Page 11

COMMUNITY

If data is always driving the bus, we're never going to get anywhere

When the Seattle Police Department's plan, 20/20, A Vision for the Future, was rolled out at the end of March, I adopted a wait-and-see attitude.

Ha! Do you see what I did there? And I got to say, "wait-and-see" for the first time ever. Let's wait and see if I can do that again... Wow, that was fast!

OK, I must calm down. What I wanted to wait and see about was: What did some of the 20 measures really mean, and how much were they going to cost us?

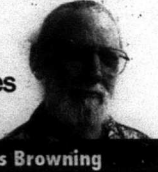
For instance, what did Number Four, "Train all officers on use of force standards consistent with Seattle's values," mean? Does it mean only use passive-aggressive techniques? Does it mean not whacking someone until first using the words, "Excuse me, you really shouldn't be doing that here," at least five times, and then declaring that it's bad for the officer's own health, and then saying, "You know, this isn't Los Angeles, this is Seattle!"

The same questions come up with measure Number Eight, "Train new officers to understand Seattle." Where the heck are we getting police officers from, anyway, that it takes a lot of effort and study for them to understand Seattle? It's a city. It's not a huge city. It's on the water. Salt water on one side; fresh water on the other. We have more than one traffic light. We pay too much for coffee.

Number 10, "Develop a binding, written code of ethics," is just scary. The thought that this was necessary for

Adventures in Irony

Dr. Wes Browning



a police department this size at this late date in its history is disturbing. Codes of ethics have been all the rage since about 1750 B.C.

And Number 11, "Recruit great officers." First I think, "What, nobody thought of that before?" Then the horrible thought dawns that what they probably mean is they don't pay them enough to be great. Isn't that what everyone means by "recruit"? That's the big league approach to excellence, rather than the "It would be great if you'd just do your job right" approach to excellence.

Here's a recruitment tool: Fire everyone who isn't great. Rehire for the vacated positions. Repeat as needed.

The whole "Partnering with the public" section at the end of the document gave me the willies. This is probably just me. I'm the sort of person who doesn't go in for a lot of handholding and Kumbaya and drivel about really knowing people. I just want the cops to leave me alone, and please not whack me, and now they want to come see me and be my friend?

What does Number 19, "Launch a community outreach initiative," mean?

What is the purpose of this, except to cover for propaganda to tell us why we should be happy?

Their job consists of nothing but outreaching to the community and interacting with the community. What's lacking isn't outreach from the police, it's outreach to the police that has any effect at all on their behavior. Nothing we do or say has mattered. Complaints are ignored or rationalized.

The measure that most mystified me and left me wanting to hold off any criticism, was Number 14, "Implement a data-driven approach to policing."

I've spent the past eight years watching the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness spin its wheels and dig a rut in the road, largely because nothing ever gets done without wasting money on data collection. So immediately upon seeing data-driven anything, I'm picturing the Invasion of the Data Snatchers and "New computers for everyone!" and two new administrators for every arrest.

I understand the need for some data, now and then, to get your bearings. But the navigator is not the pilot. Data driving is overdoing it.

I suppose we have no choice now. It's too late. When you screw up so bad the federal government tells you you've screwed up, you've pretty much lost the option of a wisdom-driven policy. ■

Sound off and read more:
drwesb.blogspot.com

When you look carefully at panhandling, there's another side to the coin

A guy came up to me on the street, begging. He was a young guy and appeared to be physically healthy, although living on the streets can both break down your physical and mental health rather quickly. He wanted some spare change. So rather than just reach in my pocket for coins, I chatted with him a bit. One of my standard lines is to call attention to Real Change as a quick way to start making some money so that one can have a positive springboard to get back into life. But he didn't want to sell papers, he just wanted some money. So I asked him his age and he began to tell me bits about his hard-living, hard-knocks life.

That's certainly a pattern. After all, kids don't grow up wanting to be homeless and beg spare change for a living. As we proceeded to chat, we talked about shelter options and employment options. Admittedly, all the options were slim pickings, but he really wasn't too invested in trying. He was defeated, discouraged, and really all he wanted was some spare change. That was his life now. We the people were ATM ma-

Faith, Culture, Politics

Rev. Rich Lang



chines from which he hoped he could score just enough coinage to suck some beers down his throat and maybe find a place to lay his head.

And yes, I gave him some spare change. I find that if I simply look away, don't bother communicating, never take the homeless beggar seriously, then it's easy to simply say no and walk away. But once I engage, actually chat a bit, it's a lot harder to send another away with nothing but the words "good luck" or "God bless."

Poverty never quits. It's bad enough to be born in a family and environment of hard living and hard knocks, and it's increasingly bad to try to get work when there isn't much, to try to rent a room

when there aren't any, and, for a guy, to try to get a girl when you've got little but your increasingly banged-up looks to offer. Poverty of material goes hand-in-hand with poverty of spiritual means. It's increasingly difficult to maintain one's dignity as a bearer of God's image when folks look at you like a worm. It's hard to believe that the sun will rise tomorrow when everything in your vision is dusk or dark. It's almost impossible to believe that life is good when every moment is a struggle to survive, a struggle to escape violence and a struggle simply to eat, sleep and sit in safety. Beer helps, but it's also addictive and diminishes one's capacity to hope.

Which is worse: poverty of stuff or poverty of spirit? Actually it's a nonsensical question because they are two sides of the same coin. What we need are new coins that offer better options. ■

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GRAVITY OF ABUSE

A woman's decision to leave a violent relationship marks an extremely dangerous time. Partners can have tempestuous reactions, according to the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence

GRAVITY, Continued from Page 9

"There was no Mexican, no white, no white supremacy: just a couple of homeless [guys], striving for life, looking for work, making money."

To Francisco's Mexican friends, however, the tattoos mattered. They wanted answers.

¿Ese es tu amigo? That's your friend?

St. Yeah.

Pero el es blanco, el es racista. But he's white, he's a white supremacist.

Síííí... Yeaaaahhhh...

¿Como es que ustedes son buenos amigos? How come you guys are good friends?

Bueno nosotros trabajamos juntos, es todo. We'll, we're working together, that's all.

Even with Richard's other tattoos — the palm-sized, blue-green swastika on one pec, the line drawing of Hitler on the other — Richard never gave Francisco any trouble. They shared deep secrets that Francisco never divulged. Their friendship grew tighter.

Except now, in the apartment, he watched Richard and Brandy drink and argue. On the one hand, their private life was their business. But on the other, their private life spilled over into the apartment, which made it his business, too. Again, he felt in the middle, unsure whether to say something or shut up.

He only wanted peace and quiet, both of which were in short supply at the apartment. So even though he had to work early the next day, Francisco decided he'd go home in a bit. Right after he had another beer.

Something bad

By the time someone knocked on the door of Apartment 21 on April 29, Brandy and Richard had already downed a couple beers. It was a neighbor down the hall, inviting them over. Richard picked Ian up, and they headed to the neighbor's place.

People were there, including a guy playing guitar. As Richard sat with the six-month-old Ian on his lap, the guy strummed "Over the Rainbow." Richard danced the smiling child around as Brandy stood a few feet away.

Unlike Ian, she wasn't smiling. First, she'd been unable to speak to her 8-year-old daughter, Skye, in Idaho earlier in the day. Then the neighbor's girlfriend was giving her an earful about bringing Ian out close to 10 o'clock. When the woman wouldn't shut up, Brandy had enough. She wanted to leave, and Richard, sad about missing free beer, carried Ian back to the apartment.

Inside, as Brandy lay Ian on the love seat, she asked Richard why the woman didn't like her.

Women are bitches, Richard said.

"I didn't like hearing it," remembers Brandy. An argument began.

Another knock at the door interrupted it. The neighbor's girlfriend. She wanted to apologize. At least, that's what Richard thought, but he was drunk and couldn't be too sure. Tomorrow, he told her, come back tomorrow. When he closed the door, Brandy



Photo by Kate Baldwin

Before moving into the south Seattle apartment, Brandy and Ian lived in Hope Place, a shelter for women and families. The shelter and the apartment are three blocks apart.

asked why he hadn't let the woman in. But Richard was in the mood for bed, not talk. Brandy wouldn't let go of her question. Richard couldn't hold back his annoyance.

Shut the fuck up, he yelled.

And in an instant — Brandy was done.

All the arguing, the yelling, the hitting at Tent City 3, in the Georgian Motel, at Way Back Inn. For weeks, months, 16 long months, she'd been telling herself she'd leave him, go somewhere, anywhere. But when would she do it? When?

Tonight. Now.

I don't want to be with you anymore, Brandy said. I want to go home, back to Idaho.

There's the door, Richard said.

I need money for a bus ticket for Ian and me.

No, Richard said.

The rent money: It was in the drawer. But before Brandy could get there, Richard moved. Opening it, he shoved the cash into his pocket. Then the drawer took flight: Richard pulled it out and flung it across the room. Another followed right behind.

Brandy's mother bear kicked in.

Her first thought: Ian. Where was he? On the love seat, awake. Afraid he might roll off, Brandy placed him on the floor.

Her second thought: cell phone. Where was it? On the windowsill, across the room. She ran for it. It felt so far away.

Brandy held the phone and dialed. Or tried to. But she couldn't. Butterfingers.

Who are you calling? Richard barked. 911, she answered.

Her third thought: Oh, no. I shouldn't have said that.

Richard, aware the police wanted him for breaking a no-contact order,

raced to her. He yanked the phone away and snapped it in half.

And that's when Brandy knew. Something bad was about to happen. She could feel—

Richard's fist hammered the right side of her head. The room swirled, turning circles.

Another fist—direct—to the head. Spinning. The room, spinning.

A fist. Her head. The room, dark, going ... Knees, buckling. Falling, falling. Fist. Head. Falling. Room. Darker, darker—

Time passed: Seconds? A minute?

Coming to. On the floor. Brandy was on the floor. Fist. Who? Who—Richard. Standing over her. Straddling her. Yelling. She was yelling. Stop! Stop! Fighting. Clawing. Scratching. Biting.

Where was Ian?

Her throat. Pressure. What? Richard's hands? Strangling her? Couldn't breathe. Slapping. Get off me! Get off me! Fight—

And the front door opened. Francisco, home from the bar.

Richard kicked Brandy in the side. Francisco stood in the hallway. Richard ran to him.

She stabbed me, Richard said.

Brandy lay on the floor in the living room, holding her face. Ian was nearby. Francisco looked at Richard.

Give me your keys, Francisco said. Richard handed them over. He wanted his coat. Francisco obliged.

Now get out of here, Francisco said. Richard fled.

Walking over to Brandy, Francisco saw her face. Bloody, and her eyes were all black.

Ian cried, so Brandy picked him up. She struggled to get up.

Go clean yourself up in the bath-

room, Francisco said.

How does my face look? she asked. Bad, he said.

Handing Ian to Francisco, she stumbled to the bathroom mirror.

Swollen right cheek. Black eye. Bloody split lip. Red mark on her throat. Yes. It was bad.

Francisco didn't think the fight was bad enough to tell the cops.

More than an hour after the assault, Brandy sat holding Ian. Her cheek throbbed.

Don't call, Francisco said.

Why not? Brandy asked.

Because you drink, too. You yell, too.

Brandy would never deny it. But did that mean Richard should hit her? No.

What if he comes back? she asked.

Don't worry, Francisco said. I took his keys.

That didn't convince Brandy. Richard always came back. And when he did, he'd be furious. With a headline that only offered Internet, she had to leave, get to a phone. So she thought of a solution: to lie.

I'm going to the store, Brandy said. Even with her split lip and black eye, Francisco didn't stop her.

Forgetting her own coat, Brandy stuffed Ian into his snowsuit. She grabbed the stroller. Strapped him inside, walked out of the apartment. She rolled him down the stairs, opened the front door. More stairs, the sidewalk. Brandy stopped.

Across the street was the construction site where Richard worked. Could he be hiding there? Or around the corner?

Inside, she had devised a plan. Go to Hope Place, three blocks away. She grabbed the stroller's handlebars. She moved.

She zoomed past the apartment building, the bushes, the taco truck. She looked. No one. She passed the empty lot. Orange streetlights shone above. She reached the intersection of South Othello Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way South.

One block.

She entered the crosswalk. Barely a car on the road. No light rail train. On to the sidewalk on the other side. She pushed the stroller faster. On her right, a parking lot with cars. Was he behind one? She didn't stop. She hustled past the Bank of America, the Safeway.

Two blocks.

She picked up speed. Her feet raced. A driveway. The stroller's wheels clicked. The side of Hope Place. Almost there. Was he behind her? Don't look. Go, go. The building's lights. The door. She was there.

Brandy pounded the glass entrance with her fist. The security guard looked up, came to the door. Are you OK? he said.

I just left Hope Place awhile ago, Brandy said. I got beat up. I need to call the cops.

He let her in, and she rolled Ian into the foyer. The guard gave her his cell phone.

Brandy's fingers, working in a way they hadn't in the apartment, before she broke free from the abuse, dialed. Nine. One. One. ■