

# #WhyIStayed #WhyILeft

The Ray Rice NFL scandal had one positive unintended consequence: it got people talking about domestic violence. TMZ published the now infamous “Ray Rice elevator video” on September 8, 2014 at 1 a.m. PDT. Outrage took over the Internet, especially on Twitter.

Number of original hashtagged posts:

85,687

#WhyIStayed across all media

185,794

#WhyILeft across all media

63,883

Non re-tweets:

66,174

“Non-influencers” using the hashtags

75%

Total number of original posts and retweets

198,696



One of the most frequent reactions heard on social media was, “**Why didn’t she just leave?**” This is a common response to domestic violence shared by outside observers. Domestic Violence is a complicated, difficult subject that is best understood by the women who’ve experienced it. In response to the victim-centered criticism surrounding Rice’s then-fiancée, one woman, Beverly Gooden – a domestic violence survivor herself – inadvertently launched a viral Twitter campaign that gave tens of thousands of women the permission and platform to tell their story.

Gooden’s tweet and the subsequent hashtag movement, changed the conversation on the Ray Rice scandal from an event in sports history to a larger national conversation on the complexity of domestic violence. The phenomenon unleashed

a raw, fresh perspective on the topic from voices all over the Internet. Women, many for the first time, confessed to having been in an abusive relationship and shared their stories. The shame and stigma of having been in a domestic violence relationship got a knock-out punch in that elevator too, as women felt compelled to support each other and shed light on the prevalence of this hidden social epidemic.

The **#WhyIStayed #WhyILeft** phenomenon is a 21st century milestone event in domestic violence history. The women who bravely came forward surfaced the scale of domestic violence, as it quickly turned into a riveting global phenomenon that held everyone’s attention. Every tweet held a story, a reason why.



**Beverly Gooden** @bevtgooden · Sep 8  
@RocknLox @Pants\_So\_Short I stayed because I thought it would get better. It never got any better. [#WhyIStayed](#)



**lighthouse keeper** @lighthouse\_kpr · Sep 9  
I stayed because he said he’d kill me if I left....I left when I knew he’d kill me if I stayed...[#WhyIStayed](#) .....[#whyileft](#) ....



**Dani Bush** @you\_aresoloved · Sep 9  
I stayed because I thought he would change, and I could fix him. [#WhyIStayed](#) deep down I knew it would never happen [#whyileft](#)



**B. @DaRealFaby** · Sep 8  
People think that its easy to go out of a relationship like that but its not if you are deeply in love with the person [#WhyIStayed](#)



**Joy White** @JoyHzleyez81 · Sep 9  
I stayed because he’s the father of my 3 kids & because he’s a war Vet - which made me feel guilty for leaving [#WhyIStayed](#)



**Belinda Blue** @bbblue72 · Sep 9  
I stayed because I wanted to be married more than I wanted to be happy. [#WhyIStayed](#)



**Jess Rose** @SamRRose · Sep 11  
Because he made me feel like I was so weird and broken no one else would want me [#WhyIStayed](#)



**Raushanah Butler** @CanDoPower · Sep 9  
I left because I was a dead woman walking and I could no longer carry the weight. [#WhyILeft](#) [#NoMoreSilentTears](#) [#FlyDivas](#)



**Allyssa Hebert** @LyssaNicoleeeee · Sep 9  
I stayed because I didn't know it was abuse. [#WhyIStayed](#) I left when I realized it was. Emotional abuse is as bad as physical. [#whyileft](#)



**Espanabelle** @Espanabelle · Sep 9  
[#WhyIStayed](#) I stayed because I didn't want to take my son's home away from him, he had already lost so much.



**NyxSea** @Tgroe1 · Sep 8  
[#WhyIStayed](#) I stayed because I thought my very religious conservative family would disown me.

4 MILLION

The number of women who’ve experienced physical assault and rape by their partners.

1 IN 3

Female homicide victims are murdered by current or former partner every year.

18 TO 34

The age of women that are at greatest risk of becoming victims of domestic violence.