

Violence against Women and Girls

Women and girls all around the world have been marginalized, belittled, abused, deprived and underestimated all because of their gender. Today in the United States, this gender prejudice plays out in myriad forms, not the least of which is women earning on average 70% of what their male counterparts make for the same work. Other forms of gender discrimination take place in more violent ways such as physical and emotional abuse, rape, trafficking and female genital mutilation. Society will not flourish until women and girls thrive by means of equal treatment.

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is divided into three categories: 1) use of physical force to compel a person to engage in a sexual act against his or her will, whether or not the act is completed; 2) attempted or completed sex act involving a person who is unable to understand the nature or condition of the act, to decline participation, or to communicate unwillingness to engage in the sexual act, e.g., because of illness, disability, or the influence of alcohol or other drugs, or because of intimidation or pressure; and 3) abusive sexual contact. Anyone can experience sexual violence, but most victims are female. The person responsible for the violence is typically male and usually someone known to the victim.

It should be noted that black women and girls are especially vulnerable to sexual violence and predation, being the most unprotected and undervalued demographic. For this reason, special attention should be paid to black women, as it relates to sexual violence and misconduct. *Italicized text and action points were created to address specifically (although, not exclusively) some needs of black women and girls.*

Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious, preventable public health problem that affects millions of Americans. The term describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. This type of violence can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy. Intimate partner violence can vary in frequency and severity. It occurs on a continuum, ranging from intimidation, to one hit or chronic, severe battering.

There are four main types of intimate partner violence:

- Psychological/emotional violence involves trauma to the victim caused by acts, threats of acts, or coercive tactics.
- Threats of physical or sexual violence use words, gestures, or weapons to communicate the intent to cause death, disability, injury, or physical harm.
- Physical violence is the intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing harm, injury, disability or death.
- Sexual violence (see definition of sexual violence listed above).

Role of Colleges/Schools:

Recent national attention on the subject of sexual violence on college campuses has brought this persistent problem to the forefront of mainstream conversation. It is vital that colleges and universities work with community agencies to provide education, awareness, and a prevention approach to fit the needs and culture of each institution.

- **Train** resident hall advisors to both respond to a disclosure of sexual violence and to take steps to prevent violence before it happens.
 - *Train RAs in diversity and inclusion to better ensure that every woman under their surveillance is treated with equal concern and action, no matter the race or class of the woman.*
- **Educate** students through bystander engagement and intervention, such as co-hosting *Mocktail* (non-alcohol) events with students and supporting *Take Back the Night* events.
 - *Educate young women, particularly young black women, about sexual violence – coupled with self-esteem/self-worth – and what to do when she feels victimized.*
- **Engage** students in creating campaigns that address sexual assault on campus, such as posters that focus on obtaining consent and supporting survivors.
 - *Engage students in campaigns that promote the value of black women and girls' lives as well as the realities of sexual violence experienced by black women but rarely spoken of.*
 - *Create membership groups on who's mission is to protect and promote the rights, health, value, and safety of black women on and off campus through action and advocacy.*
- **Utilize** nationally recognized tools such as the *Community Readiness Assessment Model (CRAM)* to assess strengths and weaknesses in prevention efforts and develop tailored short and long range prevention plans.
 - *Utilize current data known about sexual violence and misconduct against black women and girls to develop new initiatives, strengthen old ones, and advocate for policy to change the culture of sexual violence.*

Role of Parents/Family:

Engaging parents is crucial for preventing child sexual abuse. Programs like *Parents in the Know*, offered throughout Allegheny County in Pennsylvania, build skills in parents that promote safe and respectful behaviors, recognize questionable behaviors in adults, how to intervene when witnessing those questionable behaviors and promote discussion between parents and children on healthy relationships and sexuality.

It is commonplace for black families to not address or acknowledge sexual violence and/or misconduct within their own families, which leads to perpetuated trauma, emotional disorders, and dysfunction within the family.

Here are some ways that family can get involved:

- **Communicate** openly and honestly.
- **Advocate** for known sexual violence to be addressed within the family.
- **Teach** your children about boundaries, safety, and healthy relationship.
- **Protect** the personal space of the women and girls within the family (as defined by them).
- **Speak out** against gender stereotypes and promote equality.
- **Break** the stigma of speaking out against sexual violence. *Do not allow young women and men (especially) to grow up believing that sexual violence is a normal thing.*
- **Challenge** those who blame the victim. It is never the victim's fault and no one asks to be raped.
- **Be supportive** if someone you love has been hurt. Ask what you can do to help and offer sexual abuse resources.

- **Make** an effort to have the minimum necessary understanding of what to do when a loved one has been victimized to ensure not to activate any triggers for the woman/girl.

Role of Co-Workers/Community:

Places of employment and neighborhoods are important arenas to combat sexual violence. Here are some ways you can get involved at these levels:

- **Challenge** sexist jokes, rumors, comments, and emails.
- **Challenge** stereotypical commentary related to black women's bodies, attitudes, and sexual conduct
- **Promote** a safe and respectful workplace and neighborhood.
- **Be inclusive** when setting workplace standards and expectations. Allow input from the demographics meant to be protected in order to ensure efforts are effective.
- **Be aware** that most of the time people are hurt by someone they know and trust.
- **Advocate** for and embrace training related to sexual violence against women to ensure an educated staff, when it comes to understanding and addressing sexual violence in the workplace.
- **Talk** to appropriate personnel at work. Utilize available community resources (faith communities, community leaders, community-based organizations, etc.) addressing personal safety and sexual violence.

Role of Men and Boys:

Men's violence and discrimination against women and girls is rooted in a history of male domination that has deeply influenced the definition of manhood in our culture. It has 3 primary aspects: 1) women are viewed as having less value than men 2) they are viewed as the property of men 3) women are viewed as sexual objects.

Every boy, every young man and every full male adult must look inwardly as to the need to value women, girls, and to value life. No woman or girl should ever have to fear for their life or the safety of their body simply because they reject a man who has shown interest in them. Men also need to step up and step out and approach the issue of violence against women and girls as 'man's issue'. We must all remember that every man came from a woman and that respect should always be present.

Therefore, men and boys should:

- **Understand** that the liberation of men is directly tied to the liberation of women.
- **Take** on violence against women and girls as a human rights issue: Write a letter to the editor about women's rights, participate in a domestic violence or sexual assault prevention event, donate to a women's rights organization.
- **Form** collaborative efforts with other grassroots culturally specific (and otherwise) community based organizations, whose missions include men purposefully engaging in prevention and/or intervention measures to ensure ending domestic violence in their communities.
- **Teach** and promote healthy concepts of manhood to each other, our sons and other boys.

- **Seek** to educate, organize and empower men and boys to engage in the solution of preventing domestic violence, sexual assault and all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls. Partner with schools, universities, corporations, government, social service agencies and communities.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) includes all procedures which purposefully alter or injure the female genitalia for non-medical reasons. The procedure is mostly practiced with girls ranging from infancy to fifteen years of age. Risk factors include hemorrhaging, fistula (premature incontinence often caused by a tearing of the urine tract during childbirth due to FGM scar tissue), cysts, infections, transmittance of blood born disease, infertility, childbirth complications, scar tissue, excessive tearing during childbirth, stillbirths, and personal death.

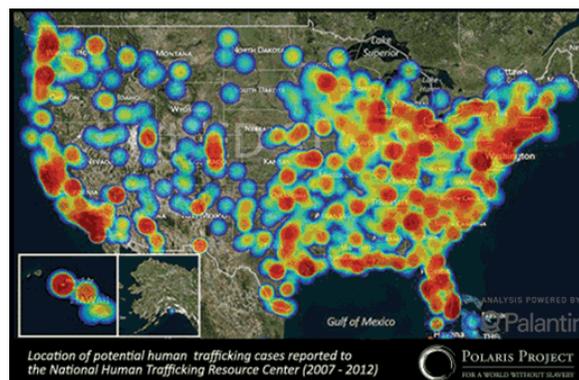
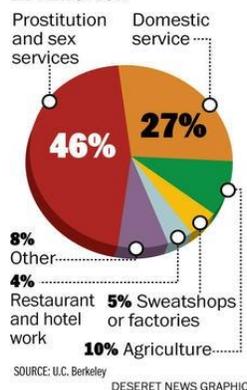
Female genital mutilation is recognized by the United Nations and the World Health Organization as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes, and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women. It is nearly always carried out on minors and is a violation of the rights of children. The practice also violates a person's rights to health, security and physical integrity, the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment, and the right to life when the procedure results in death.¹

With the influx of various cultures from around the world, such practices may be perpetrated within the borders of the United States. More than half a million women and girls in the U.S. are at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation in the United States or abroad, or have already undergone the procedure.

- **Notice** international travel plans of girls to the Middle East or Africa especially during the summer months as most FGM happens then.
- **Observe** changes in a girl's demeanor as many suffer in silence before and after FGM.
- **Encourage** local schools to include FGM as part of sexual education curriculum.
- **Report** information about incidents of FGM to local authorities and/or sexual victim advocates immediately.
- **Educate** the public and **Advocate** for dismantling this practice.
- **Respond** to the mental health and physical needs of those victimized.

Human Trafficking

Modern-day slavery in America



¹ World Health Organization, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>, 20 May 2015.

Human trafficking including the trafficking of children is a modern-day form of slavery. It includes the recruiting, enticing, harbouring, transporting, using a person for exploitation or commercial gain by force, fraud or coercion. **Sex Trafficking** is a particularly degrading type of human trafficking which enters the victim into the commercial sex industry.

Signs of Human Trafficking

- **Educate** the public on the signs of human trafficking and **advocate** for the end of this practice. Victims of human trafficking can experience the following:

Common Work and Living Conditions – The individual in question:

- Is not free to leave or come and go as she wishes.
- Is under 18 and is providing commercial sex acts.
- Is in the commercial sex industry and has a pimp/manager.
- Is unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips.
- Works excessively long and/or unusual hours.
- Is not allowed breaks or suffers under unusual restrictions at work.
- Owes a large debt and is unable to pay it off.
- Was recruited through false promises concerning the nature and conditions of her work.
- High security measures exist in the work and/or living locations (e.g. opaque windows, boarded up windows, bars on windows, barbed wire, security cameras, etc.).

Poor Mental Health or Abnormal Behaviour – The individual in question:

- Is fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous/paranoid.
- Exhibits unusually fearful or anxious behaviour after bringing up law enforcement.
- Avoids eye contact.

Poor Physical Health – The individual in question:

- Lacks health care.
- Appears malnourished.
- Shows signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, physical restraint, confinement, or torture.

Lack of Personal Control – The individual in question:

- Has few or no personal possessions.
- Is not in control of his/her own money, no financial records, or bank account.
- Is not in control of his/her own identification documents (ID or passport).
- Is not allowed or able to speak for themselves (a third party may insist on being present and/or translating).

Other– The individual in question:

- Claims of just visiting and inability to clarify where he/she is staying/address.
- Lack of knowledge of whereabouts and/or do not know what city he/she is in.
- Has loss of sense of time.
- Has numerous inconsistencies in his/her story.

Violence against women and girls confined in Institutional and Residential environments

Types of sexual violence include:

- Without their consent, visual and/or audio recording and distribution of pornographic images of women and girls, including those confined in institutional and residential environments.
- Sterilization of girls and women without their consent, thus affecting the right to reproduce.
- Stripping and leaving arrested and/or incarcerated persons naked longer than five minutes.

What to Do:

- **Enact** expeditiously legislation (local, state, national, international) making the aforementioned types of sexual violence illegal.)
- **Extend** criminal justice and mental health definitions and services to include these types of sexual violence under the parameters of rape.

Resources

Sexual Violence:

The trauma of sexual violence affects individuals, families and communities. If you are the victim of rape or sexual assault, or want to help someone who has been, contact one of the following resources:

Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (PAAR)
1-866-363-7273.

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)
<https://www.rainn.org>
1-800-656-HOPE

Intimate Partner Violence Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/intimatepartnerviolence/definitions.html>
<http://liveboldandbloom.com/11/relationships/signs-of-emotional-abuse>

The National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-.800-799-SAFE (7233) or
1-800-787-3224 (TTY) 24/7 for anonymous help.

Help for getting out of a trafficking situation:

National Human Trafficking Resource Center
1-888-373-7888
SMS: 233733 (Text "HELP" or "INFO")
Hours: 24 hours, 7 days a week
Languages: English, Spanish and 200 more languages
Website: www.traffickingresourcecenter.org

Men and Boys ending sexual violence:

Men Stopping Violence

2785 Lawrenceville Highway

Ste. 112

Decatur, GA 30033

Phone: 404-270-9894

Toll Free: 1-866-717-9317

<http://www.menstoppingviolence.org/>

<http://www.menstoppingviolence.org/programs/because-we-have-daughters>

A Call to Men

250 Merrick Road #813, Rockville Centre

New York, New York 11570

Phone: 917-922-6738

info@acalltomen.org

<http://www.acalltomen.org>

Southwest PA Says No More

FISA Foundation

535 Smithfield Street

Pittsburgh PA 15222

412-456-5550

<http://southwestpasaysnomore.org/>

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