



“Release, Where Will you Come From?": History of Advocacy and Sexual Violence

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An Old Berber Song...

So vast the prison crushing me,
Release, where will you come
from?

Brief History

- Beginnings lie in women's stories.
- Help and intervention around the kitchen table.
- First rape crisis center in 1971 and first shelter in California in 1974 providing crisis intervention.
- Essentially respite from the violence and women telling stories and supporting each other.
- Sexual Assault, colonization and slavery are intricately linked in the US.

Brief History

- Advocacy and organizing at the core of the movement.
- Very little recorded history – examples in texts, stories and oral histories.
- Efforts to support survivors have been highly organized, fragmented, community or government sponsored.
- People have always resisted.

History of the Sexual Violence Movement in the US

- History of SV is the history of struggle against racism, colonization and sexism
- Rape was used to terrorize natives and blacks into submission
- The period after civil war is particularly brutal
- 1848 – Women’s Rights Convention
- 1851 – Sojourner Truth – “Ain’t I a Woman”.
- 1866 – first women to testify following the brutal gang rape of Black women after the Memphis Riots

History of the Movement in the US

- 1870's Ida B Wells organized anti-lynching and anti rape campaigns
- 1944 – Recy Taylor case in Alabama. Formation of Committee of Equal Justice by Rosa Parks.



History of the SV Movement

- 1492 - 1662: Foundations of rape culture in the US.
- 1845 – 1885: Centrality of violence against Black women.
- 1845 – 1948: Racialized sexual violence against Black men



History of the SV Movement

- 1939 – 1955: Survivors of Color and American hostility
- 1970's: Beginning of Activism and Increasing visibility of the issue.
- 1980's: Systemic Violence against Indigenous women



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History of the SV Movement

- 1990's: Evolution of Sexual Violence against BIPOC women and Legal Victories in the definitions of SV
- 2000's: Organized activism; historical laws in prevention and response; survivor calls for change and testimonies; due process activism.

History of the SV Movement

- 1950's and 1960's – Civil rights, black liberation and anti-war laid the foundation of the feminist movement and subsequently the battered women's movement.
- 1960's and 1970's: Two branches of feminism - rape as the first issue; Inez Garcia(1974); Joanne Little (1975); Yvonne Wanrow(1976) and Dessie Woods (1976) all fought back and killed their assailants – focused political organizing

History of the Movement

- Stage 1: Breaking the Silence (early 1970's) –
 - around kitchen tables, community meetings women talked about the horrific reality
 - Sister to sister, neighbor to neighbor,
 - Speaking out, consciousness raising,
 - Backlash – accusations of provoking abuse
 - Voices of survivors – political work

History of the Movement

- Stage 2: Women's Need for Safety is Recognized (mid-late 1970's – early 1980's)
 - Creative tactics to confront rape
 - "Take back the Night" marches – 1978 first march in San Francisco – 5,000 women
 - Need for services as a collective issue
 - Creation of safe spaces, support, guidance, hope from other women
 - Self help, empowerment, healing with peer support and safety

History of the Movement

■ Key Dimensions:

- It could happen to any woman
- Men were the problem and not those experiencing the abuse
- Consequences are serious and long term
- Society needs to change to protect women and children

History of the Movement

- Stage 3: Accountability is Demanded (mid-to late 1980's – Present)
 - Recognition of private sphere but also the need for accountability from systems because of the vulnerability created by the system
 - Considerable effort to hold systems accountable
 - Moved to advocacy
 - Spread to universities – acquaintance rape; recognition of child sexual abuse

History of the Movement

■ Key Dimensions:

- Criminal justice system and civil systems – safety and accountability
- Advocacy to help women negotiate the system
- Institutions as biased, blaming, uncoordinated, confusing and endangering women and children – especially in Sexual assault

History of the Movement

■ Key Dimensions:

- Inclusion of health care and medical institutions – nurses and SANE program
- Analysis, policy, practice and public education efforts

History of the Movement

- Stage 3: Women's Experiences are Legitimized and Movement is Mainstreamed (Late 1980's – 1990's)
 - Considerable changes to institutional policies
 - Accountability, need for safety, rights to protection and access to services
 - Public awareness campaigns – prevention

History of the Movement

■ Key Dimensions:

- Move from to grassroots advocacy to more mainstream (research, evaluation, reform, training)
- Tensions – challenging institutions and SARTs
- Congressional leadership, stable funding, VAW 1994
- Concerns with VAWA

History of the Movement

- Stage 5: Advocates and Survivors Reconsider – Return to Organizing (1990's - Present)
 - General agreement that women are safer
 - Many marginalized groups lacked the attention and issues are not being considered and answered
 - More focus on advocacy and accountability
 - Serious problem with backlash – false memory, violent women etc.
 - Expansion of inclusion to LGBTQ issues; male survivors

History of the Movement

■ Key Dimensions:

- Large network of programs and coalitions – local, state and national
- Stable stream of funding
- Greater public awareness
- Significant policy reform
- Approx. 5,000 programs and state coalitions

Over the years...

- A wide array of services within the programs
- Funding was intermittent – many went under
- Increased attention of marginalized survivors: LBGQTQIA, Disabled, LEP.



Advocacy is the cornerstone..

- Advocacy is the basis for the development of all services within programs both for sexual violence.
- Advocacy was built by survivors.
- Almost all programs are run by non-governmental organizations funded in different ways through various government channels

Integration of services..

- Work with health care to change screening, intervention and referral services between VAW programs and health care – use of all major medical establishments
- Connections with programs included close links to social work and advocate placed in hospitals

Advocacy...

- Advocacy for survivors both within and with other systems players led to many changes – criminal, civil, immigration laws.
- Over the past decade it has led to better integration of concerns and services.
- Following work with the legal system – much advocacy and change focused on health care.

Integration of services..

- Development of prevention programs – CDC
- Recognition of trauma has helped moved the field – more collaboration with mental health providers
- DELTA projects and prisoner rape



Guiding Principles of the Work

- Promote and Protect by focusing on safety and justice
- All services to be holistic and driven by the needs of survivors
- Non-judgmental advocacy
- Empowerment and decision making is key
- Build partnerships and coordination

Core Principles of Intervention

- Respond to the Needs of Victims
 - Do we know the needs of victims affected by this practice? How do we find out?
 - How does this practice respond to the needs of victims?

Core Principles of Intervention

- Recognize Differential Impact on Different Communities
 - Socioeconomic
 - Culture
 - Ethnicity
 - Immigration/citizenship status
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Non-majority culture community must review and monitor practices to inform policy making

Core Principles of Intervention

- **Involve Victims in Monitoring Changes**
 - Survivors and advocates from outside the system must continually monitor policies and practices to
 - assess their effectiveness in protecting victims
 - identify unintended consequences of interventions

In conclusion...

- Inclusion of marginalized survivor experiences and needs to guide systems change work.
- Advocacy is the cornerstone of change and has historically been at the forefront.

In conclusion...

- “It seems utopian, but the world must recover its capacity for dreaming and in order to start, a new paradigm is required.....”

Cecilia Lopez