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Our commitment to racial justice

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR)/National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) considers racial justice critical to the movement to address and end sexual violence. We seek to uphold racial equality and oppose racism in all forms. Committing to racial justice propels sexual violence prevention work forward and helps to dismantle power imbalances that have long-existed in the United States.

In the United States, communities of color have experienced systemic prejudice and racism. Sexual violence has historically been used as a tool of oppression. Black women have experienced an “institutional pattern of rape” rooted in slavery (West & Johnson, 2013, p. 1). Additionally, more than 10,000 indigenous children were forced to attend government-sponsored Christian boarding or day schools beginning in the late 1800s, and “rampant sexual abuse at reservation schools” among other abuses by school officials continued until the end of the 1980s (Smith, 2007, p. 13). The effects of institutionalized power imbalances continue to propagate prejudice and racism against communities of color.

Today, crimes of sexual violence are largely intraracial — meaning victims and perpetrators share the same racial and cultural identity — however, system responses to these crimes remain woefully inadequate as experienced by communities of color. Barriers to seeking help remain significant for communities of color and are influenced by racism and other forms of oppression in the U.S. It is important to note American Indian and Alaska Native men and women are three times more likely than non-Hispanic White men and women to have experienced sexual violence by an interracial perpetrator (Rosay, 2016). People who identify as multiracial are more likely to experience sexual violence than white people. Research reports 3.1 million Black rape victims and 5.9 million Black survivors of other forms of sexual violence (Black et al., 2011). Between 40 – 60% of Asian women in the United States report experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime (Raj & Silverman, 2002; Yoshihama, 1999). People who speak languages other than English experience greater barriers in receiving access to services (Zwieg, Newmark, Raja, & Denver, 2014).

As a state and national organization, we are committed to using our power and privilege to ensure that the needs of communities of color are at the center of sexual violence prevention and response. PCAR/NSVRC works to develop resources, research, and networks to address sexual violence against people of color. Our work must include and be informed by all voices that speak to the connections between sexual violence and oppression, and we seek out partners that have an intersectional approach.

We will only be successful in ending sexual violence when we examine and dismantle all forms of oppression. Devaluing communities of color fuels sexual violence. When we address the connections between violence and sexism, racism, classism, ableism, ageism, adultism, heterosexism, xenophobia, and other forms of oppression, we acknowledge oppression as part of the same system of values that fuels sexual violence.

PCAR/NSVRC believes our movement and our larger society are strongest when we seek and exalt the expertise and experiences of people and communities of color. Therefore, services and prevention efforts must include and be accountable to people of color. Please join us in ensuring that all of our work to end sexual violence includes a racial justice lens.

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