

New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault — NYSCASA



Open Letter Regarding Violence Against Women of Color

The New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NYSCASA), as an organization dedicated to advancing civil and human rights, eliminating gender-based violence, and advocating for survivors, expresses a collective outpouring of sorrow at the institutional violence against women of color and the lack of accountability. While we experience outrage at all violence, there continues to be disproportionate gender-based violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, state-sanctioned systemic violence and community violence against women of color.

As a part of the movement to end violence against women, NYSCASA must also acknowledge our complicity in a movement that too often fails to recognize that women of color started this movement. Women of color continue to make important contributions to this movement, and yet mainstream organizations engage in practices that exclude, discount, and silence women of color. White women must recognize the intersections of oppression and fight for racial justice under the leadership of women of color. Women of color and white women are sisters who must work together in our shared fight for justice.

As social media continues to expose the targeting of women of color and their communities, NYSCASA feels compelled to take an active stance. It is imperative that we link all forms of violence and intersections of oppression, and that we recognize how events are connected through systemic racial prejudice, stereotyping, and abuses of power. Recent events include:

- Sandra Bland who was abused and injured by police and later found hung from her jail cell;
- Sarah Lee Circle Bear who died after police failed to obtain medical treatment for her, instead jailing her for a minor offense;
- young girls of color being violated by Texas police at a pool party;
- institutional sexism and racism imposed upon the famous tennis player Serena Williams;
- uneven application of the “Stand Your Ground” laws in cases such as that of Marissa Alexander of Jacksonville, Florida;
- victim blaming in cases such as that of the Janay Rice and Ray Rice domestic violence incident in Baltimore, Maryland; or
- the criminalization of survivors of intimate partner violence who act in self-defense

NYSCASA seeks to galvanize a collective voice in solidarity with those seeking justice for lives compromised, dehumanized, and lost due to institutional violence in all of our communities. We call upon individuals of all genders across communities to mobilize in instances such as the recent events. We collectively choose not to be silent, and we invite all organizations to learn how to support and give voice to those who have been victimized. We join communities of color in resisting violence and structures that—rather than heal marginalized communities—criminalize, wound, and silence women of color.

To that end, NYSCASA will collectively use all of our networks and outlets to raise our voices, bring attention to injustice, and work toward social change.

We hope you will join us in working to build inclusive gender and racial justice movements that intentionally work in the intersections and lift up the lives and experiences of girls and women of color.

Sources:

What happened to Sandra Bland:

<http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jul/17/sandra-bland-texas-protest-racial-tensions>

Police ignored Native American woman, telling her to ‘quit faking’ as she died in jail cell:

<http://countercurrentnews.com/2015/07/justice-for-sarah-lee-circle-bear/>

Cop pulls out gun on black teen in Texas pool party:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/06/07/new-video-shows-texas-police-officer-pulling-gun-on-teenagers-at-pool-party/>

When we attack Serena Williams’s body it is really about her blackness:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/serena-williams-policing-of-black-bodies_55a3bef4e4b0a47ac15ccc00

Stand your ground not applied to Marissa Alexander’s case:

<http://www.cnn.com/2012/04/24/justice/ac360-stand-your-ground-law/index.html>

Why did Janay Rice Stay? :

<http://www.forharriet.com/2014/09/why-did-janay-rice-stay-therapist.html#axzz3gQirOHYR>

Domestic violence and sexual assault are two of the most prevalent forms of gender-based violence:

<http://www.justice.gov/ovw/blog/joint-statement-office-community-oriented-policing-services-office-victims-crime-and-office>