



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

*A NATIONAL VOICE FOR STATE
AND LOCAL ADVOCATES DEDICATED
TO ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE.*

December 15, 2015

National Alliance to End Sexual Violence Commends Department of Justice Guidance on Gender Bias in Law Enforcement Response

Last week, we were riveted by the stories of the women victimized by Daniel Holtzclaw, by their courage in telling their stories, and by the assumptions apparent in Holtzclaw's violent behavior—that his badge made his power unquestionable; that struggling women of color would not come forward and would not be believed; and that racism and sexism would play to his favor in getting away with these vicious violations. We know that the history of rape in our country is one of sexism and racism intertwined. Despite the defense attorneys' success in creating an all-white jury and attempts to use the victims' vulnerabilities against them, the guilty verdicts against Holtzclaw take us one step forward in our collective “no” to a societal acceptance of preying on the vulnerable.

Today, the Department of Justice released a guidance document, “Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias in

Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence.” Monika Johnson Hostler, President of the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV) said, “We believe this guidance can take us the next step forward in keeping victims safe and holding offenders accountable.” We know most law enforcement agents don't commit the abuses of power Holtzclaw did, but it's imperative that all departments and officers address gender bias in policing, both in policies and in practice, and intervene when unacceptable behavior and violations occur in their departments. Advocates have long voiced concern that some law enforcement officers have failed to take survivors' reports seriously. Rape crisis centers stand ready to partner with law enforcement to address the institutional sexism, racism and victim blaming attitudes present within every institution in our society. Monika Johnson Hostler commented, “Many work in law enforcement for all the right reasons—to protect the vulnerable and hold those who break our laws accountable. This guidance gives them a tool to more vigorously investigate sexual assault. We are also excited for advocates to use this guidance to

build or strengthen partnerships with law enforcement in their communities. We know from situations like Missoula that change can happen when we work together.”

NAESV urges law enforcement agencies to work directly with community-based rape crisis programs to discuss the guidance, form partnerships, and organize training. The funding and programs authorized by the Violence Against Women Act are an invaluable tool to help ensure a robust response to the crime of sexual assault. In order to make all communities safer, we must respect and listen to all victims who come forward with reports and take steps to prevent future sexual violence by investigating and prosecuting these crimes and ensuring survivors have access to community-based advocacy services during every step of the process.