



**National Alliance to  
End Sexual Violence**

### **Statement in Support of Survivors**

May 1, 2020

We support all survivors. As long-time advocates with a great deal of collective expertise, we actively support those impacted by sexual violence. We will continue to advocate passionately for the services and policies survivors need to heal and thrive, and for a society that respects and listens to them. Our solidarity with survivors transcends politics. We find it despicable for anyone to make their support contingent on politics or to use a survivor's story for political purposes.

All survivors have a context to their lives that impacts how they are perceived. This context is often used to try to discredit them, and that is wrong. We will never engage in picking apart a survivor's account.

We also know and understand many things about the impact of trauma on those who have experienced sexual violence:

- False reports are very rare.
- Delayed reporting is very common.
- A lack of clarity about details or a changing story is common.
- Uncertainty about going public for fear of how it will impact oneself or one's children or family is common.

We call on the media and general public to cease impugning those who come forward based on these common reactions.

No one's behavior is above scrutiny. No one gets a pass. We expect our leaders to be models of respectful behavior and speech. Where they have transgressed or caused harm, now or in the past, they must take responsibility and be held accountable. The concept of accountability should not be limited solely to criminal justice responses but must include the input of those who have been harmed.

Our culture based on male dominance and power plays a key role in perpetuating sexual violence. Until we examine and address all the ways abuses of power play out in our society, too many survivors will have their dreams derailed by sexual violence.

Everyone must take responsibility to be part of the solution and refrain from taking the well-worn road of victim blaming:

- Speak up when you hear inappropriate comments.
- Encourage your friends and colleagues to donate to your local rape crisis program.
- Be willing to hold complicated truths that defy easy solutions.
- Listen compassionately to survivors' experiences.

Let's begin by believing.

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