

Myths and Facts about Rape and Black Communities

Who is At Risk?

Anyone can be raped. Most rape victims are female, but men are also raped. Victims can be teenagers, elderly, married or single. Girls and women between the ages of 15 and 25 are at the greatest risk of being raped. No matter where or when a rape takes place, or who the rapist is, rape is always a terrifying experience.

Rape Is Not About Sex...

What is Rape?

Rape is forcing someone to have sex against her or his will. Rape is a violent crime of power and control. Sex is used as a weapon. Rapists come from all classes, races, and backgrounds.

The Color of Rape Statistics

- Rates of rape and sexual assault had similar incidence rates among blacks, whites, and persons of other races in 2001[BJS]. Among the people 12 and older, about 83.5% of the population is white, and 82.5% of rape victims are white; 13.3% of victims are black, compared to 12.3% of the population; and 4.2% of both victims and the populations are of other races (NCVS 2000).
- In a 1994 survey of 243 women, the rates for adult rape showed African-American women disclosing the highest rate(37.9%), followed by white women (25.5%), Latinos (17.9%), and Asian-Americans (10.5%) (Urquiza, A.J. and Goodlin-Jones, B.L. Violence and Victims).
- For every white woman that reports her rape, at least 5 white women do not report theirs; and yet, for every African-American woman that reports her rape, at least 15 African-American women do not report theirs (Bureau of Justice Special Report 2003).

Myth: The majority of rapes are committed by black men against white women.

Fact: 90% of rapes occur between people of the same race and economic class.

Myth: Black women are promiscuous and always ready for sex.

Fact: Myths about black women's sexuality play a large part in silencing us. Many black women fear that speaking out about sexual abuse may only cause people to think that black families/communities are more violent.

Myth: Most rapists are strangers.

Fact: While a rapist can be anyone, it is more likely that the rapist knows his victim. 85% of sexual assaults are perpetrated by an acquaintance.

Myth: Black women are raped at a much higher rate than white women.

Fact: While black women are victims of violent crime more than whites or persons of other races. Rates of rape and sexual assault had similar incidence rates in 2001.

How to Challenge Rape & Support Survivors

- **Confront oppression, since it contributes to violence.**
- **Recognize that sexism is in our communities.**
- **Hold rapists accountable.**
- **Listen to and believe survivors.**
- **Let survivors make their own decisions.**
- **Support survivors' feelings.**
- **Help survivors understand that violence is not their fault.**
- **Give Survivors appropriate information.**
- **Challenge myths about rape, be clear that rape happens in all communities, talk about sexual assault in our communities, and demand our right to live without violence.**

What to Do If You Are Raped

Try to stay calm. Your safety should be your first concern. Look for ways to escape or get attention. However, you may not be able to do either. Many rape victims fear for their lives. Whatever you do, know that in surviving, you did the right thing.

Get medical help as soon as possible. Even though you may not appear to be hurt, there may be injuries that are not visible. Your local emergency room should provide treatment for rape victims 24 hours a day. If the crime is reported within 48 hours to the police, and you cooperate with the investigation, the Sex Crime Victim Compensation Fund may cover the emergency room costs and follow-up exams.

Do not change your clothes. Do not wash, drink, use the toilet, or douche before you go to the hospital. Going straight to the hospital helps preserve evidence of the crime. The police will need to retain your clothing, so take a change of clothes with you.

Report the rape to the police. Your report may be used to file a charge against the rapist. It also might help someone else. Many rapists are repeat offenders. Your report might help a case that is already being investigated or help prevent a future rape.

How you May Feel

Each rape is different, and each victim may experience many different feelings. Some include...

- Fear of being alone
- Anger
- Fear of crowds
- Embarrassment
- Fear of men
- Guilt
- Fear of strangers
- Depression
- Fear of others
- Mistrust in people finding out

Healing & Recovery

Recovery takes time, and the process is different for everyone. A victim may need ongoing support during recovery. A rape crisis center provides specially-trained-people who will listen and help. If there is no center in your community, call one of the numbers on the back of this brochure.

Special Issues

Responding to sexual violence in Black Communities

The history of racial injustice and the need to protect our communities from racist attacks might make a survivor decide not to report a sexual assault. Our communities must take a strong stand against sexual violence - making it clear that there is zero tolerance for sexual abuse and that perpetrators will be held accountable by the community. Taking the collective stand of calling out sex offenders can have the impact of discouraging sexual assault.

“For Black Women, where rape is concerned, race has preceded issues of gender. We are taught that we are first black, then women...Black women have survived by keeping quiet, not solely out of shame, but out of a need to preserve the race and its image. In our attempts to preserve racial pride, we black women have often sacrificed our souls.”

Charlotte Pierce-Baker, Author
Surviving the Silence
Black Women's Stories of Rape

To connect with the crisis line in your area, call:
1-800-656-HOPE

(Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN))

For More Information or Help Locating a Local Rape
Crisis Center:

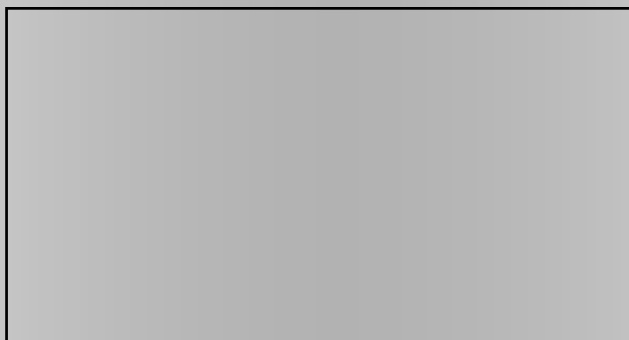
INCASA

55 Monument Circle, Suite 1224
Indianapolis, IN 46204
email: incasa@incasa.org
website: www.incasa.org

317-423-0233

1-800-691-2272

Family Wellness Helpline
Indiana State Department of Health
V/TDD 1-800-433-0746



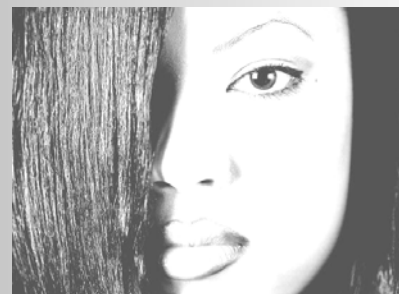
For more information relating to women of color and sexual assault or rape:

The National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault (SCESA)

P.O. Box 625
Canton, CT 06019
860-693-2031
email: sistersl@sisterslead.org
website: www.sisterslead.org

INCASA is the state coalition against sexual violence providing prevention and intervention services and resources to communities, professionals, and survivors.

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Women of Color and Rape



INCASA

Indiana Coalition Against Sexual Assault
www.incasa.org