

SAAM 2021



MEET THE
MOVEMENT

SEXUAL ASSAULT
AWARENESS MONTH

2021 TOOLKIT | #MeetTheMovement



LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Members:

Over the past year, the principles and resilience of our movement have been tested like never before. As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, and rape crisis centers and sexual assault programs adjust to new ways of meeting survivors' needs, it has never been more important to evaluate our work to end sexual violence, and recognize the connections our movement has to broader justice movements that seek to create a society where the dignity of every person is valued and respected.

For this year's Sexual Assault Awareness Month, ValorUS (formerly the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault) announces "[Meet the Movement](#)." This toolkit promotes solidarity across various movements – LGBTQ+ equity, racial equity, economic justice, health equity, immigrant justice, and more – as a way of advancing our collective goal: a fair and just world, a world free from violence.

Not only does this toolkit provide pathways for engagement with allied movements, but it also seeks to strengthen the capacity of our communities to prevent and intervene in sexual assault by addressing root causes that create the conditions for violence and oppression. While the toolkit highlights complex connections between various movements and issues, for some it will be a starter conversation (and a conversation starter). Imagine emerging from this global pandemic with new insights, directions, and mandates to do things and treat humanity differently.

Our movement to end sexual violence has always, in various ways, confronted issues of race, inequality, and identity. But understanding our connection to these other movements for equity and justice in society, and advancing their goals together with ours, is more urgent than ever. We hope you will find this toolkit useful, inspirational, action-oriented toward change; and, that it will serve as a blueprint for how we can all continue fighting for a better world.

As always, we look forward to promoting the innovative work of anti-sexual assault organizations, staff, advocates, and allies. Let's honor Sexual Assault Awareness Month as a movement, together.

Sincerely,

Sandra Henriquez MBA
[CEO, ValorUS](#)

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ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

BACKGROUND

Our contemporary fight to eliminate sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse has its roots in the justice and liberation movements of the mid-20th Century. Fundamentally, this kind of activism is about asserting the dignity of all people. Our movement embodies the same spirit that lives in the fights for women's rights, LGBTQ+ equity, racial justice, and so many more. At its core, this work is about understanding power, how violence is used to boost power for some and diminishes power for others, and when certain types of violence are enacted against collectivized groups, it functions as a form of social control. Using (and abusing) power and violence in this way often begins with devaluing human life, leading to marginalization, disenfranchisement, limited opportunities, and other social inequities.

For nearly a decade, ValorUS (formerly the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault) expanded its efforts to highlight sexual assault as both a product of, and producer of social inequity – or the absence of fairness and justice as a social norm – which creates intergenerational cycles of societal violence. We understand sexual assault as one manifestation of sexism (along with sexual harassment, sex discrimination, the denial of reproductive health care, etc.) that secures patriarchal dominance, ensuring that wealth and power remains largely concentrated with men. Sexism is rooted in the same soil as other forms of oppression that similarly disenfranchises groups based on race, class, sexual identities, religions, residency status, and abilities. Complicating this understanding is that none of us live single-identity lives. We are multifaceted, but all find ourselves belonging to one dominant culture or another that disenfranchises others.

ValorUS believes that in order to prevent and end generations of sexual violence, we must simultaneously be in the business of advancing equity. If we promote equity and justice across society, then it necessarily improves the quality of life for women, people with marginalized gender identities, people of color, children, low income wage earners, people with disabilities, immigrants, incarcerated and detained persons, migrant workers, those working in various sex trades, and men.

As the anti-violence against women movement embraces fifty years of activism, we want to work more intentionally and in solidarity with other movements for justice, equity, and human liberation. ValorUS seeks to support sexual assault programs with strategies for collective action to advance equity and justice for all.



MEET THE > MOVE MENT

SAAM 2021 INSPIRATION: MEET THE MOVEMENT

In February 2021, ValorUS invited California rape crisis centers, sexual assault programs, community partners, preventionists, advocates and co-conspirators to participate in the Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) Assessment Survey via an email. The SAAM assessment survey was two-fold: First, to identify areas of greatest need for creating and promoting a just and equitable world free from sexual violence. Second and most pressing, to create an interactive SAAM Toolkit that elevates, amplifies and aligns with the ongoing training needs and strengths of our rape crisis centers, their communities, and other organizations. We received a total of 56 responses. Our SAAM Toolkit was created by actively listening to these voices.

One of the key themes that emerged from the survey responses was drawing the connections between sexual violence and social justice issues. This toolkit is a response to that request. Further, respondents identified four key objectives for Sexual Assault Awareness Month:

- Create awareness
- Spark dialogue
- Mobilize community to action
- Work in partnerships and collaborations

We really hope this SAAM Toolkit will help you “meet the movement” – by highlighting the linkages between various social justice efforts, and their connection to preventing and ending sexual violence, and further transforming culture. **By fearlessly promoting equity and justice, and inspiring solidarity across movements, we will collectively end sexual violence.**



HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This SAAM toolkit is an update of the widely used and shared SAAM toolkit that we released in 2017. It has been intentionally created to lay out the reciprocal connections between preventing and ending sexual violence and the broader equity and social justice movements. As per your survey responses, this year's SAAM toolkit intends to strengthen your efforts to:

1. Increase awareness of sexual assault in a post #MeToo era
2. Increase partnerships and collaborations with other agencies and movements working for social justice
3. Increase active bystander knowledge and intervention about sexual violence
4. Have ongoing conversations with your communities.

To ensure you are able to use this toolkit in your communities, we have provided you with background information highlighting the linkages between sexual violence and intersecting issues of LGBTQ+ equity, racial justice, economic justice, transformative justice, health and wellness, and immigrant justice. These sectors allow us to strengthen our capacity to build solidarity movements, and anticipate alignments and alliances in the future. The graphics, activities, resources and examples included in this toolkit can be adapted, modified and tailored to developing social media campaigns, engage in fireside conversations with your colleagues and community members, hold art and storytelling contests for your youth, inspire you to write blog posts, or join a letter writing campaign.

What's the connection between LGBTQ+ Equity and the Anti-Sexual Violence Movement?

1. Heterosexism insists that there are only two genders, and that the only acceptable form of coupling is male and female, which denies LGBTQ+ persons equal access to society.
2. Heterosexism dehumanizes LGBTQ+ persons and condones homophobia and transphobia.
3. It perpetuates a hostile environment that increases opportunities for sexual abuse and violence against LGBTQ+ persons.

LGBTQ+ EQUITY

At the root of oppression and violence perpetrated against LGBTQ+ groups is heterosexism, which becomes the barrier for achieving equity and justice, institutionally, systemically, politically, economically, and culturally. But how does promoting LGBTQ+ Equity and Justice prevent sexual violence? Laws that limit a population's access to privileges (e.g., marriage, health insurance, military service, religious practice, public restrooms, etc.), signals to broader society that certain populations matter less and therefore are not afforded the same protections as those of the majority class. Cultural spaces where LGBTQ+ folks are stereotyped or invisible such as in entertainment media or politics impede our ability to challenge heterosexism. These attitudes and beliefs create the conditions for everyday discrimination, maltreatment, and acts of violence as those that would marginalize LGBTQ+ folks know they can act with little to no repercussions.

We can see how heterosexism creates conditions for sexual violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer, non-binary, and gender non-conforming individuals. In fact, sexual violence impacts LGBTQ+ communities at greater rates compared to cisgender heterosexual men and women. Couple this with the reality that LGBTQ+ communities include minorities of many sorts (ethnic, immigrant, class, ability, etc.) who struggle to understand which of their minority identities has been targeted for maltreatment. Transgender people in particular face some of the [highest rates of sexual violence](#), especially transgender women of color. Intentionally working to advance both LGBTQ+ rights and to end sexual violence create [equitable and safe communities](#) for all gender identities and sexual orientations. The attitudes and beliefs that uphold restrictive gender and sexuality roles also directly contribute to sexual violence. To combat these norms, those working to prevent and respond to sexual violence should direct their focus to creating inclusive environments and center the unique needs of LGBTQ+ individuals. Part of this work is ensuring that [providers](#) clearly address and actively work to [create a culture of safety and equity](#) for LGBTQ+ staff, clients, and community members. LGBTQ+ Equity and Justice targets the conditions that foster the devaluation of this population while challenging the dominant position and normative assumptions of heterosexism.

ACTION STEPS

- Creating awareness and promoting LGBTQ+ equity and justice in your community
 - » Discuss the [Black and LGBTQ+: Approaching Intersectional Conversations](#) with your youth
 - » Invite your youth to explore [Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth is Violence Prevention Social Media Kit](#)
 - » Review ValorUS' web conference: [TransForming The World: Best Practices in Service Delivery for Trans/GNC Populations](#)
 - » Watch and discuss NIWRC's web conference: Call to Action: [Responsive Advocacy for 2SLGBTQ Native Youth Experiencing Dating Violence](#) with your staff
- Engaging in an ongoing dialogue about how LGBTQ+ equity aligns with your organization's values
- Identifying ways to take action and create culture change
 - » Screen Movies to Educate Yourself on Gender Justice: [The Commons List](#)
 - » Host a virtual screening of a film for your community: [Out In The Night](#)
 - » Identify how race and sexual orientation intersect sexual violence in our work
- Increasing partnerships and collaborations with other agencies:
 - » Create paid opportunities and accessible spaces for advocates to speak at your events.
 - » Share, post, and elevate the work being done by organizations such as:
 - [TransLatina Coalition](#), [Forge](#), [National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs](#), and [The Trevor Project](#)

What's the connection between Racial Equity and Justice and the Anti-Sexual Violence Movement?


1. In the US, racism springs from European expansion, white settler colonialism, domination, subjugation, and exploitation of non-white people, facilitated by dehumanization and denial of human rights.
2. Denial of human rights of non-white people in the Americas, was and continues to be embedded in societal structures (legal, economic, political, etc.), and enforced through violence.
3. Dehumanization explicitly characterized people of color as hyper-violent, sexually deviant, dangerous, insatiable, etc., which created the conditions for sexual violence and abuse, overcriminalization, and extrajudicial killings of people of color.

RACIAL EQUITY

Racism is a system of oppression that organizes and structures societies along racialized power. The racial hierarchy in the US positions white authority at the top and has done so since the founding of America, conceptualized as a “[white man's country](#).” The racialization of non-white people during this period included processes that characterized them as hypersexual and a sexual threat to whiteness, rationales for widespread and enduring sexual violence, assault, abuse, and discrimination, some of which would become internalized and intergenerational. Laws, institutions, policies, and practices were created to exclude racialized people of color from “belonging” in America. The lingering effects of racism create numerous – sometimes intersecting – disparities found in education, health care, employment, housing, criminal legal, religion, and media.

Connecting racial equity and justice to anti-sexual violence work is complex. The [tragic killings of Black people](#) due to police brutality and heightened incidents of [anti-Asian hate crimes](#) reminds us of our urgent commitment to center anti-racism and anti-oppression in our anti-sexual violence work. Thus, our doctrine of collective action and collective liberation recognizes that no one is safe until all are safe. But consider how a community's internalization of historical racist trauma can produce societal phenomena like the sexual abuse-to-[school to prison pipeline](#) where girls of color are disproportionately arrested and detained for status offenses (runaway, truancy, etc.), and increased rates of [suspension or expulsion](#) when compared to white students. Children and adults in communities of color encounter alarmingly higher rates of sexual violence that lead to negative health outcomes. Characterized as “disruptive,” Black and Brown girls are more likely to be incarcerated and receive harsher sentencing when processing sexual trauma, than their white counterparts. Further, when [law enforcement officials perpetrate sexual violence](#) and excessive force against [girls and women of color](#) to exercise their power and control, we can connect this to historical hypersexualization and the idea that their bodies are not their own. And we should note how the criminal legal system treats women of color affected by sexual and interpersonal violence like [Marissa Alexander](#) and [Nan-Hui Jo](#) who have higher conviction rates, or face criminalization/deportation for defending themselves against their abusers.

[Racial equity and justice](#) states that we go “[beyond 'anti-racism'](#) [as they are] not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports [...] through proactive and preventative measures. (p.31)” The historical and systemic impacts of racism and white supremacy are key considerations when developing policies, laws, practices, and to effect culture change. It addresses past harms and lingering



effects of oppression, inclusive of a trauma informed approach, as a way of moving forward. Racial equity and justice must be intentional, and sustained via personal, organizational, and institutional structure, culture and values. Examples may range from having uncomfortable yet critical continuing conversations with our staff and communities about race, privilege, ally-ship and white supremacy. It may also look like identifying those historical and social contextual risk factors that condone and perpetuate racialized oppression and violence. While reflecting on the work to end sexual violence, it is imperative to identify ways that race should inform advocacy efforts aimed at increasing equity and community healing. To end sexual violence there must be a steadfast commitment to eradicate racism and [advocate for Survivors and Communities of Color](#) impacted by sexual violence.

ACTION STEPS

- Creating awareness and promoting racial justice and equity in your community
 - » Have your staff or your community (e.g. youth) to review the [History of Racism and its Movements](#)
 - » Watch the recording of the [API-GBV's](#) archived web conference [What is Gendered Islamophobia?](#)
 - » Host a virtual screening of a film for your community: [The Rape of Recy Taylor](#)
 - » Review PCAR's Fact Sheet (2014): [Sexual Violence and the Impact on Latin@ Communities](#)
 - » Explore API-GBV's Fact sheet: [How COVID-19 and Systemic Responses Are Impacting Asian and Pacific Islander Survivors of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault](#) to find culturally-relevant materials
 - » Watch a [TED Talk](#) on The Urgency of Intersectionality by Kimberlé Crenshaw
 - » Watch HEART's [Barriers to Disclosure](#) video created for Muslim communities during 2017 SAAM
 - » Write a blog on what this means for our anti-violence movement during SAAM
- Asking your community members about what racial justice means to them through social media

- Identifying ways to take action and create culture change
 - » Watch ValorUS' archived web conference: [The Bystander Mixtape to Prevent Systemic and Intercommunal Violence: Grounding Our work in Empathy, Reconciliation and Racial Justice Activism](#)
 - » Read [An Overview of the SAFE \(Sectors Acting For Equity\) Approach: Promoting Community Environments that Support Safe Relationships and Prevent Domestic Violence](#)
 - » Watch [Don't be a Bystander: 6 Tips for Responding to Racist Attacks](#)
 - » Screen Movies to Educate Yourself on Racial Justice: [NetImpact List](#), and [The Commons List](#)
- Increasing partnerships and collaborations with other agencies:
 - » Create paid opportunities and accessible spaces for advocates to speak at your events.
 - » Cross train and partner with Black, Indigenous, people of color led organizations
 - » Share, post, and elevate the work being done by organizations such as:
 - [Black Women's Blueprint](#), [Justice for Muslims Collective](#), [Red Women Rising](#), [National Indigenous Women's Resource Center \(NIWRC\)](#), [Asian Americans Advancing Justice \(AAAJ\)](#), [Latinx Racial Equity Project](#), and [Black Lives Matter](#)


What's the connection between Immigrant Justice and the Anti-Sexual Violence Movement?

1. The discrimination, xenophobia, oppression and hate violence experienced by immigrant communities originate from white supremacy.
2. Immigrant survivors fear reporting or seeking help due to threats of immigration and law enforcement, especially if they are undocumented.
3. Oppressive policies and punitive practices imposed on non-white immigrant groups are often compounded with racism, sexism, and xenophobia.

IMMIGRANT JUSTICE

The immigrant justice movement encompasses many issues affecting immigrant communities and survivors. Exclusionary [anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies](#) have disproportionately targeted Black/Indigenous/People of Color (BIPOC) from accessing full citizenship – leading to exclusion from land and voting rights, access to economic advancement, and experiences of interpersonal and state violence – all of which are issues that greatly impact a survivor's ability to heal and recover. This rhetoric has long been engraved into the country's history – leaving us with today's immigration enforcement policies that incentivize racial profiling, detention and deportation. In response, the movement calls for an end to the criminalization of immigrant communities and a just solution to the [immigration system](#). Unfortunately, a precarious immigration status not only imbues fear of detention and deportation, but it also impacts access to education and jobs and ultimately, the ability to reach economic independence. Immigrants seeking safe and affordable housing, work that will pay a livable wage, and a community support system are often wading through language and cultural barriers and a lack of knowledge about their rights in isolation.

Because immigrants do not lead 'single issue' lives, the movement to achieve immigrant justice intersects with many movements to address the violence and discrimination that immigrants face in the U.S. The separation of families and forced sterilization – stemming from mass deportation and detention efforts – has led to immigrant parents' inability to raise their children in a safe community with dignity, a core belief upheld by reproductive justice advocates. Sexual violence experienced by [immigrant farm workers](#), [domestic workers](#), and janitorial workers during the "night shift" has propelled the labor movement to address exploitative labor practices imbued with racism, misogyny, and xenophobia. Survivors of sexual assault, homophobic and transphobic harassment became vocal about abusive practices and widespread institutional indifferences in [immigration detention](#) and California rape crisis centers responded by increasing institutional accountability and providing crisis intervention and emotional support. Regardless of our own placements in various movements, we must be responsive to the needs of immigrant survivors of violence. States that strictly enforce anti-immigration laws deter immigrant survivors from interacting with law enforcement, reporting abuse, and accessing supportive services from community-based organizations.




Key to this understanding is how anti-immigrant sentiment fosters the conditions that make sexual violence possible and probable. Frequently, exploiters and abusers use threats of deportation and incarceration as a means of controlling immigrants which allows those who would cause harm to: commit wage theft; withhold important documents such as passports, visas, and medical records; and exact physical and sexual violence against adults and children. Knowing that immigrants may be fearful or untrusting of government institutions facilitates these potentially violent situations.

But many immigrant survivors are taking matters into their own hands by leading their own movements to end sexual violence – like [Ya Basta Coalition](#), a fearless group of janitorial workers who started a movement to “[end rape on the night shift](#)” and Lideres Campesinas, a network of women farmworkers who advocate for survivors in their own communities. Immigrants survivors who have self determination over their destinies have the ability to transform the movement to end sexual violence to be more responsive to the needs of immigrant communities. Together, we recognize that immigrant justice must center healing and justice for immigrant survivors of sexual violence.

ACTION STEPS

- Increasing awareness and promoting immigrant justice in your community
 - » Watch ValorUS’ archived web conference [Sexual Violence and Supporting Immigrant Communities](#)
 - » Watch the recording of the [API-GBV’s](#) archived web conference [What is Gendered Islamophobia?](#)
- Facilitating discussion about the intersections of immigrant and labor justice
 - » Host a virtual screening of the documentary “[Rape on the Night Shift](#)” for your community
- Identifying ways to take action in the moment and create culture change
 - » Explore how does this movement align with your organizational values in your staff meetings

- 
- Increasing partnerships and collaborations with other agencies:
 - » Create paid opportunities and accessible spaces for advocates to speak at your events
 - » Share, post, and elevate the work being done by organizations such as:
 - [Ya Basta Coalition](#), a fearless group of janitorial workers who started a movement to “end rape on the night shift
 - [Lideres Campesinas](#), a network of women farmworkers who advocate for survivors in their own communities
 - National Immigrant Women’s Advocacy Project ([NIWAP](#))
 - [California Immigrant Justice Pipeline Project](#)
 - [California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice](#)

What's the connection between Alternatives to Criminalization and the Anti-Sexual Violence Movement?

1. Relying on the state to intervene or depend on the criminal justice system for justice has often failed to protect the rights of those affected by sexual violence, nor is it a deterrent from sexual violence.
2. Prisons, jails, youth and immigration detention facilities are systems of power and social control that perpetuate sexual violence and violate the rights of prisoners on multiple levels.
3. People from communities of color are at a heightened risk of being criminalized and detained than their white counterparts, which is fueled by racism, sexism, xenophobia, ableism etc.
4. Criminalization will not end sexual violence because detaining and caging people in prisons does not tackle the deeply embedded root causes resulting in sexual violence.
5. Promoting incarceration perpetuates an endless cycle of sexual violence and oppression.


ALTERNATIVES TO CRIMINALIZATION

The feminist movement's relationship with the criminal legal system is complicated. Our current iteration of the anti-violence against women's movement [relied heavily](#) on this punitive institution: it was the only way to make a misogynist society take violence and abuse of women and children seriously. However, despite being warned by civil rights activists, one of the consequences of that effort would be contributing to the over-incarceration of people of color, already heavily under surveillance by the US police state. In the last half of the 20th century, incarceration has truly developed into a [prison industrial complex](#), a multi-level profit driven alliance between government and industry whose economic incentive is to keep cells full and politicians in office. Decades later, we are challenged with the need for accountability toward survivors of interpersonal and community violence, without furthering the racist and capitalist carceral system.

Importantly, what we have learned is that an over-reliance on detention and incarceration undermines our overall vision to end sexual violence and by extension, societal oppression. The horrifying and traumatizing conditions in which people are kept in detention centers and prisons fosters an increased prevalence of violence rather than reducing or deterring violence. There also exists [huge racial disparities](#) behind bars – Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are disproportionately impacted by mass incarceration, racism, and ultimately, sexual violence. Those who are locked up, rarely receive the treatment needed to transform their behavior and prevent further harm in their communities.

While we work to eliminate prison rape and violence, it is essential that our movements collectively and in meaningful ways engage with alternatives to criminalization. With the troubling rates of mass incarceration, state violence and criminalization of survivors of sexual and domestic violence, many communities and advocates are interested to learn more about non-criminalization alternatives such as transformative and restorative justice.

As the anti-sexual violence movement continued to engage with the criminal legal system, transformative justice practitioners continued to draw upon historical, cultural traditions, strengths, and practices to organize and help communities heal themselves without state intervention. Transformative justice work is critical to the self-sufficiency of communities who are over policed, over incarcerated and consistently surveilled. [Transformative Justice](#) (TJ) is a community-based framework for addressing violence and harm that embraces an anti-oppression framework, and actively seeks to cultivate protective environments that prevent violence from happening in the first place.



Justice and healing may look different for those who have been affected and harmed by sexual violence. Grounded in a core set of principles, including the belief that people are not disposable and harm does not fix harm, transformative justice principles and practices envision “[survivor safety, healing and agency](#)” (p.21). By fostering connection, [community accountability](#) and shifting the societal conditions that may have condoned and perpetuated sexual violence, [TJ can strengthen prevention efforts](#). As many survivors do not want to involve the state (prisons, criminal legal system, child services, etc.) in their healing processes, being well-versed in the TJ values and practice can be instrumental in providing trauma-informed support.

ACTION STEPS

- Creating awareness and addressing the impacts of criminalization in your community
 - » What are the conditions in your detention centers and prisons?
 - » Interview: [You Can't End Violence With More Violence: Shifting From Incarceration to Accountability](#)
 - » Watch VALOR's web conference [The Trauma of Detention](#)
 - » Watch VALOR's web conference [Setting up Rape Crisis Services for Incarcerated Survivors](#)
 - » Challenge the false dichotomy between those harmed and those who caused harm
 - » Read [Organizing for Community Accountability](#) and explore resources on [TransformHarm.Org](#)
- Engaging in an ongoing dialogue about the prison industrial complex
 - » Watch the documentary [Hollow Water](#) to about a community's response to address child sexual abuse through dialogue and accountability
 - » Watch 2020 NSAC workshop [Not In My Name: A Workshop For BIPOC Survivors For Prison Abolition](#)
 - » Watch 2020 NSAC workshop [Sexual Violence And Transformative Justice In Abolitionist Times](#)

- Identifying ways to take action and create culture change
 - » Invite staff to explore ways to support survivors of sexual assault impacted by the prison industrial complex
 - » Watch [Everyday Practices of Transformative Justice](#) video
 - » Have your staff read [Transformative Justice A Curriculum Guide](#)
 - » Host a discussion how this guide can be used to learn more about transformative justice
 - » Read ValorUS' blog post [PODS: A Strategy for Conflict Management and Violence Prevention from The Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective](#)
- Increasing partnerships and collaborations with other agencies:
 - » Create paid opportunities and accessible spaces for advocates to speak at your events
 - » Share, post, and elevate the work being done by organizations such as:
 - [Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective](#)
 - [Just Practice](#)
 - [Love & Protect](#)
 - [PREA Resource Center](#)
 - [Survived and Punished](#)

What's the connection between health equity and wellness and the Anti-Sexual Violence Movement?

1. Health inequities create conditions that allow sexual violence to occur and create barriers to seeking support in the aftermath of violence and trauma.
2. Using a health equity framework can prevent sexual violence by addressing root causes of violence and inequity, expanding partnerships, and addressing systems that exacerbate inequities.
3. Health equity challenges old paradigms of public health with a history of oppression to instead use anti-oppression frameworks and organizing to create conditions where everyone can survive, thrive, and live without violence.

HEALTH EQUITY

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), "Health equity is achieved when every person has the opportunity to 'attain [their] full health potential' and no one is 'disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or other socially determined circumstances.'" Health equity means people have opportunities to live the healthiest life possible no matter who they are, where they live, or what their socioeconomic status is. Sexual violence is a health equity issue and preventing sexual violence is one element in advancing equity in health and in strengthening communities. Health inequities create conditions that allow sexual violence to occur, and using a health equity framework can prevent sexual violence by casting a wider net across health and social justice issues.

When people discuss higher rates of sexual violence across various identities (including race, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.) and communities, they are often identifying a health inequity. Health inequities are a response to and function of systems of oppression. Health inequities not only create conditions that allow sexual violence to occur, but they also create barriers to those seeking support, care, and healing after experiencing violence and trauma. One way to analyze how health inequities impact health and violence is through [social determinants of health](#), which include access to and quality of: healthcare, education, social and community support, economic stability, and neighborhood and environmental design. Racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression mentioned in this toolkit create and exacerbate health inequities and their impacts on the social determinants of health.

Health equity calls on communities to create the conditions in which everyone can thrive, not just survive. Health equity opens the door to [multisector partnerships](#) to not only prevent sexual violence, but to create safety, security, and good health. Using a health equity framework not only advances sexual violence prevention through disrupting oppression, but it also connects sexual violence prevention to public health and public health crises like the corona virus pandemic, and serves as a bridge to racial justice, reproductive justice, and other topics covered in this toolkit. Health equity is one framework to integrate preventing sexual violence into a holistic, anti-oppressive view of public health, which often has a historical and contemporary context of replicating the systems of oppression that health equity aims to disrupt.

ACTION STEPS

- Creating awareness and promoting health equity especially for marginalized groups
 - » Explore the [THRIVE: Tool for Health & Resilience In Vulnerable Environments](#) by Prevention Institute with your staff
- Engaging in a fireside chat about the significance of health equity and wellness in our work
 - » Ask your staff how they envision decolonized, affordable and accessible community healthcare?
 - » Read the article [The Unspoken Complexity of “Self-Care”](#) by Deanna Zandt
 - » Deconstruct the use of the buzzword ‘self care’ for promoting mental health and well- being
- Identifying ways to take action in the moment and create culture change
 - » Host virtual town halls to discuss the health disparities and inequities during the pandemic
 - » How do people with disabilities, medical conditions, chronic health issues etc navigate their rights to access healthcare and holistic healing, especially if they have experienced sexual violence?
- Increasing partnerships and collaborations with other agencies:
 - » Create paid opportunities and accessible spaces for advocates to speak at your events
 - » Share, post, and elevate the work being done by organizations such as:
 - [The Breathe Network](#)
 - [Banteay Srei \(Asian Health Services\)](#)
 - [Prevention Institute](#)
 - [Disability Rights Legal Center](#)

What's the connection between disability justice and the Anti-Sexual Violence Movement?

1. Ableism constructs the world for the benefit of able bodied and neurotypical people; not considering the needs of persons with disabilities to access the world around them, causes marginalization, and further reduces their ability to be full participants in society.
2. Prejudice, stereotyping, and ignorance lead to lack of access and opportunities for people with disabilities including denial of employment, education, housing, and emotional/social well being.
3. Dehumanization of people with disabilities happens when the ableist world assumes this population to be without agency, including that of sexual health, well being, and desire. This creates the conditions for increased risk of sexual violence among this population.

DISABILITY JUSTICE

People are shocked to hear that someone with a disability, a senior, a homeless person, etc. could experience sexual assault largely because of social attitudes that 1) still locate rape as an act of sex, and 2) devalue them as social beings. It is almost as if they think “why would anybody assault _____person?” This thinking increases targeting for victimization because predators assume that vulnerable populations will not be believed. The lived experiences of people with physical, learning, developmental, and intellectual disabilities are often misrepresented and stereotyped in our mainstream narratives, reinforcing systemic and institutional practices and policies that create societal barriers, poverty, and isolation. As marginalization increases, so does risk for sexual violence. Further, racism, sexism, and class bias compound the experience and risk for marginalization and ostracization of persons with disabilities. For example, studies show how youth of color are frequently misdiagnosed with cognitive disabilities, which are instead marked as “discipline problems” that set them on the path toward juvenile incarceration. The act of devaluing, dismissing, or patronizing those with disabilities is disempowering, and sexual violence, when viewed through the lens of disability justice, becomes crystallized as an issue of bodily autonomy, and personhood.

Our anti-sexual violence movement must guard against paternalistic attitudes, and recognize how people with disabilities are often deprived of their agency and decision-making. We must recognize people with disabilities are sexual beings, who are culturally, societally, and institutionally disallowed the space to explore their sexuality. Further, our work must identify ways to prevent marginalization because those who would do harm believe that no one is paying attention. This means going beyond accessibility, and actively challenging society's tendency to devalue these populations' abilities.


[Sins Invalid](#), “a disability justice based performance project,” explores the intersections of disability and ableism as it interacts with other forms of oppression. From the piece “[What is Disability Justice](#),” Sins Invalid articulates a disability justice vision in which we all understand and reflect that:

- All bodies are unique and essential.
- All bodies have strengths and needs that must be met.
- We are powerful, not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them.
- We understand that all bodies are caught in these bindings of ability, race, gender, sexuality, class, nation state and imperialism, and that we cannot separate them. These are the positions from which we struggle.

As Mia Mingus, a transformative and disability justice trainer, states, “We must, however, move beyond access by itself. We cannot allow the liberation of disabled people to be boiled down to logistics. We must understand and practice an accessibility that moves us closer to justice, not just inclusion or diversity.” As the mantra for the disability rights and justice movement, “nothing about us, without us” speaks truth to the community’s power.

ACTION STEPS

- Increasing awareness and promoting disability justice in your community
 - » Read [Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People, a Disability Justice Primer](#) by Patty Berne and Sins Invalid
 - » Listen to NPR’s: [In Their Own Words: People With Intellectual Disabilities Talk About Rape](#)
- Engaging your staff and community in virtual fireside chats and social media
 - » Discuss how people with disabilities are represented in mainstream media?
 - » How do these public narratives impact these communities?
 - » Watch this [Sins Invalid](#) documentary and use the [recommended study guide](#)

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- Identifying ways to take action in the moment and create culture change
 - » What can a community do to create accessible and inclusive public, virtual, and office spaces?
 - » How can survivors with disabilities, medical conditions, chronic health issues etc navigate their rights to access trauma-informed accessible healthcare and holistic healing?
 - Increasing partnerships and collaborations with other agencies:
 - » Create paid opportunities to invite disability justice advocates to speak at your event
 - » Share, post, and elevate the work being done by organizations such as:
 - [Sins Invalid](#) (founded 2006) is the oldest US Disability Justice organization, and is led by disabled BIPOC and queer/trans/non-binary disabled people
 - [Barnard Center for Research on Women](#)
 - [The Arc of California](#)
 - [California for Disability Rights](#)
 - [Changing the Framework: Disability Justice How our communities can move beyond access to wholeness](#)
 - [Moving at the Speed of Trust: Disability Justice and Transformative Justice](#)

What is the connection between economic justice and anti-sexual assault movement?

1. Money and wealth is tied to power and various forms of oppression; the correlation between wealth and quality of life is undeniable as those with less access to capital at greater risk for negative health outcomes
2. Vulnerable communities facing poverty and economic hardships whose ability to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves and their families experience sexual violence are compounded with the layering of burdens that impact basic needs
3. As sexual violence is a power-based issue, it is inextricably linked with the inherent power associated with economic status and access to survival resources.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Economic justice is an integral part of social justice and centers the need for equity in leadership opportunities, access to financial resources and leverages a critical lens toward rectifying the distribution of wealth [under capitalism](#). As sexual violence is a power-based issue, it is inextricably linked with the inherent power associated with economic status and access to survival resources. Simply put, those who have financial security have power and those in society with the least amount of power are the most at risk for experiencing power-based violence. [Reducing power-imbalances](#) related to economic security such as access to [non-discriminatory work environments](#), [wage sustainability](#), [paid family leave](#), and housing is an integral part of preventing gender-based violence. Additionally, the [exploitation of workers](#) with marginalized identities is rampant and creates conditions that allow pervasive sexual violence to occur. Many organizers who are [committed to addressing](#) the overlap of economic exploitation and sexual violence are working at these intersections.

Creating leadership opportunities for marginalized genders and strengthening economic support is a [key sexual violence prevention strategy](#). Using the [social ecological model](#), the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) highlight the specific economic risk factors for sexual violence at four levels of influence, including unemployed/low income individuals, economic stress on domestic relationships, rampant poverty, and patriarchal norms around employment. Economic stability is also cited as a major factor in the [social determinants of health](#).

At the root, the need for economic and gender justice is greatly impacted by [intersecting forms of oppression](#) such as racism, classism, ableism, xenophobia and transphobia. Social norms like class stigma and other forms of discrimination can reduce an individual's willingness or ability to access financial support or to earn livable wages, which sometimes leaves entire communities more vulnerable to experiencing interpersonal violence. For example, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) as well as LGBTQIA+ individuals are overrepresented in unhoused communities and also experience the [highest rates of sexual violence](#). As the anti-sexual violence movement continues to move forward with a goal of preventing violence and oppression in all its forms, economic justice must be a strategy at the center.

ACTION STEPS

- Increasing awareness and building economic justice and equity in your community
 - » Watch VALOR's archived web conference [Essential and Vulnerable: Essential Workers and Sexual Violence](#)
 - » Read VALOR's report: [The Cost and Consequences of Sexual Violence in California](#)
 - » Write a blog on how economic justice must include preventing sexual violence for essential workers
- Increasing awareness and building economic justice and equity in your community
 - » Engaging in an ongoing dialogue about how your programs can address economic justice
- Identifying ways to take action and create culture change
 - » Learn about the workplace policies and protocols in place to share with your community members
 - » Identify ways of developing policies and legislations promoting economic justice
- Increasing partnerships and collaborations with other agencies:
 - » Create paid opportunities and accessible spaces for advocates to speak at your events.
 - » Share, post, and elevate the work being done by organizations such as: [One Fair Wage](#) and [Paid Family Leave](#)

GRAPHICS

ZOOM BACKGROUNDS



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