

NEWSLETTER - August 2019

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Nameless Screening at Busboys and Poets

On August 7, Rights4Girls hosted a screening of the DCCESV documentary *Nameless* at the Busboys and Poets in Anacostia. The screening was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Rachel Friedman (Men Can Stop Rape), which featured interviewees from the film Yasmin Vafa (Rights4Girls), Ashley Harrell (Safe Shores), Naiké Savain (Children's Law Center), and Tina Frundt (Courtney's House). The screening was well-attended by members of the community, clinicians, parents, survivors, and advocates, among others. During the panel, audience members had the opportunity to ask thoughtful questions about child sex trafficking in DC, prevention tips, and the implications of the Council's decriminalization bill.



If your organization is interested in hosting a screening of *Nameless*, please contact Hannah Goldstein, Program Coordinator at Men Can Stop Rape, at hgoldstein@mencanstoprape.org

Toni Morrison Dies at 88

Author Toni Morrison passed on August 6, 2019. The first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, Morrison authored fiction that was widely read by common readers and critics alike. Her narratives were lauded as both aesthetically gorgeous and political. Her writing did not shy away from violence or trauma; her treatment of these things as part of the fabric of American life was one of many ways she examined the oppression of African Americans through writing. She was a master of “using language to combat the devastating effects of white supremacy, sexism and all dehumanizing ideologies...[her writing] shifts our attention from the powerful to those over whom they exert power.” Morrison authored 11 books in her lifetime.



Stay Current: Legislative Charts

This quarter, we draw your attention to one of DCCESV’s resources. The Coalition maintains charts of proposed and passed legislation both in DC and nationally. Find this resource on our website under the [Policy + Legislation tab](#).

Bill Number	Bill Title	Sponsor(s)	Relevant Bill Focus	Last Activity	Scheduled Activity
B23-0318	Community Safety and Health Amendment Act of 2019	Grosso, Nadeau, R. White, Bonds	Decriminalizes prostitution if those involved are 18 years of age or older, and removes all related criminal penalties related to such work, with the exception of those involving coercion, trafficking, etc.	Introduced to the council on June 4, 2019.	Referred to Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
B22-0028	Childhood Protection Against Sexual Abuse Amendment Act of 2017	Grosso, R. White, Cheh, Todd, Bonds	Eliminates the civil statute of limitations for recovery of damages arising out of claims of child sexual abuse	Public hearing on 6/15/17; no committee report issued	No activity scheduled
B22-0111	Safe Way Home Act of 2017	T. White, Grosso, Cheh, Gray, Evans, Bonds, Todd, McDuffie, R. White	Requires the Mayor to award annual grant of \$5,000,000 to a single grant-managing entity to provide violence outreach and community programming in Wards 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8	Public hearing in committee on Labor and Workforce on 4/3/17; currently in the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety	Next step is consideration by Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety through a hearing or report; No activity scheduled

SAVRAA 2019 UPDATE

On July 11, 2019, the Sexual Assault Victims' Rights Amendment Act of 2019 [SAVRAA] was voted out of the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety. The Committee is open to continued revisions. The DC Council plans to vote on the bill this fall.

Organization Spotlight: Rights4Girls



DCCESV is proud to recognize Rights4Girls this quarter for their advocacy on a national and local level. Rights4Girls is a human rights organization working to end gender-based violence in the U.S by centering the voices and experiences of our most marginalized girls to ensure that their needs are made a priority

Rights4Girls is a non-profit based in Washington, DC that works at the intersection of race, gender, and violence. Through policy reform, public education campaigns, research, training

and technical assistance, youth engagement, and coalition building, Rights4Girls strives to end gender-based violence locally and in the US. These efforts produce change on a broad basis, laying the groundwork to improve our nation's institutions.

Focusing on issue areas such as juvenile justice, conditions of confinement, child welfare, and girls' rights, Rights4Girls is currently leading a campaign initiative called "No Such Thing as a Child Prostitute." This campaign seeks to eradicate the use of the term child prostitute in language and in law. The campaign recognizes that this term obscures the fact that children involved in commercial sex trade are victims of rape. It also frames commercial sex trafficking and commercial rape as issues of gender-based violence.

This work has not only been essential in its own rite, but has contributed much to the DC legislative landscape. As the DC Council considers a bill that will fully decriminalize the buying and selling of sex in the District, Rights4Girls has been a prominent voice urging the Council to consider the implications such legislation would have for sexually exploited youth.

Another critical contribution of Rights4Girls is the research with which the organization furnishes the field. With a host of resources such as fact sheets, papers, and reports, Rights4Girls aims to bring human rights to the forefront of public discourse by educating stakeholders—including lawmakers, the general public, and the media—on issues that directly affect girls and young women.

With its work directly affecting the legislative and cultural landscape, Rights4Girls strives to create impact that is “sweeping, enduring, and generational.” By influencing policies to advocate for victims of gender-based violence—instead of criminalizing them—Rights4Girls is working to create a more just society for girls and young women.

Yasmin Vafa, Executive Director of Rights4Girls, recently co-authored an OpEd in the Washington Post with Tina Frundt, Executive Director and Founder of Courtney’s House, about the prostitution decriminalization bill. [Find their article at the Washington Post.](#) To learn more about the organization’s work and how to get involved, go to <http://rights4girls.org/>

Reframing Bystander Intervention: A Continuum of Intervention

By Hannah Goldstein, Program Coordinator, Men Can Stop Rape



When bystander intervention is taught, folks who don’t spend much time engaging with gender-based violence imagine a specific narrative—one that involves interceding right before assault can happen. This view does not account for the fact that violence occurs on a continuum, so it may lead to a misunderstanding of what bystander intervention looks like.

In truth, bystander intervention is inclusive; anyone can intervene, and it does not demand ideological mastery of issues surrounding gender-based violence from those who do. One doesn’t have to be an activist in the community to intervene in ways big or small. Rather, at the heart of intervention is a singular goal, and one that is not difficult to grasp: mitigate harm.

As we know, gender-based violence plays out in varied ways. At times, it can be immediate and identifiable. But it also persists in attitudes, social norms, and language. If this is the case, our

approach to bystander intervention can be similarly manifold. Bystander intervention doesn't look like any one specific action—rather, it is a continuum.

Reframing the way we think about intervention carries power with which to mobilize. If intervention can be any number of actions or ideas, then it becomes even more accessible, and less difficult for people to conceive of themselves as possible agents of change—however minor.

The coverage of the Jeffrey Epstein case is a prime example of this; as the media and Twittersphere have rehashed the case, readers and writers alike have posed the question: why did no one step in?

Part of the answer here is that Epstein's crimes have been labeled, up to this point, in a way that encourages people to look the other way. After pleading guilty to paying an underaged girl for "sexual favors" in 2008, Jeffrey Epstein served 13 months in jail. In being convicted for purchasing sex, Epstein's admission of guilt was passive; the framing of his charges "made it look like the teenager was in part to blame" (NYT).

This is a logic to which Epstein clung. In 2011, he told the New York Post, "I'm not a sexual predator, I'm an 'offender.' It's the difference between a murderer and a person who steals a bagel."

Epstein's disgraceful bagel analogy underscores a critical point: language informs attitudes. In his embrace of the word "offender" and rejection of the word "predator," he attempted to make bystanders dissociate from the repetitive nature of his crimes. It's the same logic that allows people to use the term "child prostitute" in place of "sex trafficking of a minor" or "child rape." At bottom, it's a way to euphemize violence against women and girls. Society, in all its discomfort confronting sexual assault, welcomes the opportunity to rename this violence as a way of avoiding it. We must consider the extent to which the media's coverage of this case has extended Epstein's violence.

The term "child prostitute"...[is] a way to euphemize violence against women and girls. Society, in all its discomfort confronting sexual assault, welcomes the opportunity to rename this violence as a way of avoiding it.

Consider the maxim "language is violence." In this field, violence is more than an academic construct: it can be tangible, visible, immediate. It merits consideration that if our language is

permissive of sexual violence, our culture will be too. We might consider that there are still ways to intervene here. Namely, by changing the way we talk about it.

If we can conceive of bystander intervention as a continuum, we broaden the scope of what constitutes an intervention—not only for those predisposed to identifying and fighting gender-based violence, but for those who may not consider themselves a part of this conversation. Among them, boys and men.



At [Men Can Stop Rape's](#) Healthy Masculinity Training Institute in July, the group explored the idea of “calling in” as a form of bystander intervention. It’s a less-confrontational way of drawing attention to harmful attitudes, and, notably, is not what most people imagine when they think of bystander intervention. In some ways, the fact that this strategy does not match common perceptions of bystander intervention produces some of its power to disarm. While it may not be suitable when immediate violence is at hand, calling in is a tool that prioritizes educating in a non-alienating manner.

We would do well to embrace and teach forms of intervention that diverge from the typical narrative, because this enables us to engage more people in ending gender-based violence. Broadening how we think about bystander intervention gives agency to people who consider themselves beyond the scope of this work. Making a more conscious effort around language—and mobilizing others to do the same—should be uplifted as a form of intervention. Not only will the shift in cultural ethos be significant, but more people will begin to see all forms of intervention as more accessible.

By reframing bystander intervention to include more actors, we create both more allies and more opportunities to produce change. While active and direct bystander intervention will always have value as a way of interceding when violence is at hand, thinking of intervention as a continuum of actions encourages more people to speak up when they witness violence perpetrated in any form.

Article: The Impact of Racism on Child and Adolescent Health

American Academy of Pediatrics



The American Academy of Pediatrics recently published a report called “The Impact of Racism on Child and Adolescent Health.” The paper asserts that racism has measurable impacts on child health and calls upon researchers and health institutions to

examine these effects more closely. It argues that racism is a social determinant of health; racism creates health inequities that “are not the result of individual behavior choices or genetic predisposition but are caused by economic, political, and social conditions.” Furthermore, the physiological responses associated with stress caused by exposure to racism—both for bystanders and individuals targeted by racist acts or comments—can increase incidence of chronic disease. Ultimately, the paper calls for clinical practices to train health professionals on the effects of racism in pediatric health. In doing so, they may be better equipped to provide guidance to youth and families in understanding racism and replacing negative messages with positive and prosocial messages. This would also enable doctors to assess patients for stressors and social determinants of health associated with racism, and to connect families with resources. To learn more about action steps that communities and health systems can take to take a more proactive approach to racism in pediatric health, [read the full paper](#) under the Studies + Reports tab at the Coalition website.

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