

# Voices Against Sexual Assault



MONTHLY UPDATE

JULY 2011

## “Slut Walks” Sweep the Nation

On January 24th, 2011 at the Osgood Hall Law School in Toronto, a movement was born when a Toronto Police Services officer addressed students at a campus safety information session saying that “women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimized” (SlutWalk Toronto).

Students at the school demanded an apology from local law enforcement because “[a]s the city’s major protective service, the Toronto Police have perpetuated the myth and stereotype of ‘the slut’, and in doing so have failed us” (SlutWalk Toronto).

Clearly, suggesting that survivors of sexual assault are somehow to blame when they are assaulted is a backwards and outdated mode of thinking, but it is one that we hear constantly. For many survivors,



the first questions they are asked when they disclose an assault begin with the dreaded “why?”

*Why were you there? Why did you wear that? Why didn't you fight harder? Scream louder? Drink less? Leave earlier? Stay home?*

According to the organizers of the first SlutWalk, based in Toronto, these walks “are a movement demanding that our voices be heard. We are here to call foul on our Police Force and demand change” (SlutWalk Toronto).

The organizers note that “Historically, the term ‘slut’ has carried a predominantly negative connotation. Aimed at those who are sexually promiscuous, be it for work or pleasure, it has primarily been women who have suffered under the burden of this label. And whether dished out as a serious indictment of one’s character or merely as a flippant insult, the intent behind the word is always to wound, so we’re taking it back” (SlutWalk Toronto).

NPR recently reported on the SlutWalks sweeping the nation, after a recent walk in Seattle brought hundreds of walkers to the streets. NPR reported that “there are some people who are a bit uneasy with some elements of the protest movement. Catherine Sharpe is one of many women at the rally who were uncomfortable with “I’m a Slut” protest signs and the general chest-beating on display” (Romo, 2011).

However, as SlutWalk Toronto notes “Whether a fellow slut or simply an ally, *you don’t have to wear your sexual proclivities on your sleeve*, we just ask that you come. *Any* gender-identification, any age. Singles, couples, parents, sisters, brothers, children, friends. Come walk or roll or strut or holler or stomp with us” (SlutWalk Toronto).

While there was a July 25th walk planned in Detroit, it has been postponed. This begs the question of whether Kalamazoo should step forward and host its very own SlutWalk. Let us know what you think on Facebook or by emailing us at [info@voicesasa.org](mailto:info@voicesasa.org) with your opinion!

## Monthly Meeting Move Reminder

As a reminder to those who have attended or wish to start attending VOICES monthly Planning Committee meetings, during the May 2011 meeting, members voted to move the regular meeting from the FIRST Thursday of the month at 2PM to the SECOND Thursday of the month at 4PM.

While the time and date of the meeting has moved, the meetings will continue to be held at the YWCA Kalamazoo, which donates space to the group each month for the purposes of the Planning Committee Meetings.

The next VOICES Planning Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 14th at 4PM at the YWCA of Kalamazoo. We hope to see you there!

## Next Meeting

Thursday, July 14th @ 4PM  
YWCA Kalamazoo

VOICES meets regularly at the YWCA of Kalamazoo on the SECOND Thursday of the month at 4PM. Please RSVP to [info@voicesasa.org](mailto:info@voicesasa.org) to join us!

