



SANTA BARBARA RAPE CRISIS CENTER
CENTRO CONTRA LA VIOLACION SEXUAL

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RACE DIVIDES ADVOCATES - MINORITIES SAY WHITE ACTIVISTS
IGNORING INEQUITIES IN SYSTEM

Sarah Huntley, Rocky Mountain News

For more than two decades, Colorado's victims' advocates have been united in a single goal: protecting the rights of abused and sexually assaulted women. They've fought side by side for tougher laws, more police intervention and longer jail sentences. But now, in a debate that threatens to split the movement, some activists are calling for a shift in focus.

Lisa Calderon, spokeswoman for the local chapter of INCITE Women of Color Against Violence, said she and others are fed up by what they see as racial disparities in how victims and offenders are treated. Calderon says mainstream advocates are reluctant to acknowledge what many advocates of color see - that more minorities are swept up by the system the movement has helped create. Once they are, minority offenders are treated more harshly and minority victims get less support, she said. "It's a huge debate and controversy between advocates of color and mainstream advocates, who are primarily white women," Calderon said.

The tensions played out most recently not in the domestic violence arena but in two high-profile sexual assault cases. The first was the scandal that rocked the University of Colorado at Boulder after three students alleged they were gang-raped by football players and recruits at or after a 2001 off-campus party. The second was the case of NBA star Kobe Bryant, who was charged with sexually assaulting a female employee of a ritzy Eagle County lodge and spa. Bryant said the sex was consensual. The charges eventually were dismissed.

In both cases, some advocates found themselves in a quandary: They wanted to support the young women thrust into the unforgiving public eye, but they thought there was a rush to judgment against the suspects, all of whom were black. Calderon says it may not be an either-or scenario. "What if it is rape and racism?" she asked. "I don't think that because the system treated a man of color in a racist way, that excuses, once proven, a crime of violence. But I also think it requires us to recognize that the system we place so much trust in - the criminal justice system - has taken away more from communities of color than it has provided."

The disagreements over the two cases threatened to tear apart the Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault. Six of nine staff members resigned, protesting in part what they say was a ban on talking publicly about their concerns. The executive director left in the aftermath. Anpeytu Raben, chairwoman of the CCASA board, said recently that the agency has filled most of the vacancies and is looking forward to "a healthy future." Raben argues it is important to strike a balance between the Fifth and Sixth Amendment rights of defendants and the rights of crime victims, as outlined in Colorado's constitution. "We want to see those rights upheld in the best way possible," Raben said.

The debate has spilled over to the domestic violence movement, largely because the two groups share office space and exemplify some of the same philosophies. "They are two sides of the same coin. They belong to the larger coalition of a victim's rights industry," said Calderon, who works as legal and social policy director for the Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence in Boulder. "We don't have discussions about the laws and how they are unevenly applied. We are called traitors to the movement for simply asking these questions," Calderon said. Trish Thibodo, who heads the state's domestic violence coalition, said she agrees with the criticisms. "I think they are right on the mark," she said. The coalition is striving to bring different voices, including those of victims and people of color, "to the center of the table and have them be that equal partner," Thibodo said.

Cheryle Clarke, former director of development for the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence and a member of the Women of Color Network, said the victim's rights movement has failed to provide leadership opportunities for minority women. "I think it is one thing to say, 'Yeah, we've got women of color working here.' But there's a difference between that and real power sharing," she said. The advocates say their concerns have ramifications for victims searching for support. "I am 56 years old. If I were a victim, I would probably go to a shelter where the staff is primarily white, probably young and not familiar with a lot of my issues," Clarke said. "Women of color are torn by wanting the relief offered by the criminal justice system but also understanding who is in prison and why."

The critics point to national studies that show people of color make up more than 70 percent of the population in state and federal prisons. Many are serving time for drug and other offenses unrelated to domestic violence. Carol Hollomon, executive director of Alternatives to Family Violence in Adams County, said she believes more progress could be made by asking communities of color what the movement can do to help them, instead of continually stressing jail. "For minority folks, calling the police is the last thing you do because the police don't help you. As Caucasians, we need to be more cognizant of what women of color are saying to us," she said.

J.T. Garcia, CCASA's former office manager, agreed that emphasizing the use of the criminal justice system alienates communities that are fearful of law enforcement. She thinks prevention, education and more resources for shelters and housing would be more effective in reducing violence. Traditional advocates "have done good things with the laws to protect victims," Calderon said. "But we are at a place where we should be critiquing the last 25 years in our movement. We should be asking the hard questions of who is being left behind and why?"

OCTOBER 18, 2005, TEXAS JURY DENIES JUSTICE TO PRISONER RAPE SURVIVOR

Justice was denied today for former prisoner Roderick Johnson when a Texas jury decided that prison officials were not liable for his sexual abuse, the group Stop Prisoner Rape said. The twelve jurors reached their decision despite testimony from other inmates that Mr. Johnson was bought and sold by violent gang members who often rented him to other prisoners for sex for as little as \$3. Mr. Johnson testified that his complaints to prison officials about the abuse were greeted with indifference or outright derision.

"This verdict undercuts the hope that even the most marginalized of our citizens can see justice done," said Kathy Hall-Martinez, SPR's acting executive director. "Mr. Johnson has suffered immeasurably, and the Texas justice system did not hold accountable those who had the power to ensure his safety."

Although many U.S. corrections departments fail to protect their inmates from sexual abuse, the Texas prison system is by many measures the worst. A 2005 report issued by the U.S. Bureau of Justice

Statistics found that of the 1,533 incidents of inmate-on-inmate sexual abuse reported to corrections officials last year, 609 – or nearly 40 percent – of those reports came from Texas.

“Unfortunately, Roderick Johnson’s abuse is not an isolated incident,” Hall-Martinez said. “Texas prison officials have a great deal of work to do to ensure prisoners’ basic rights to be free from sexual violence and abuse.” Sexual abuse behind bars has devastating effects both inside and outside of prisons and jails. More than 95 percent of prisoners eventually are released to our communities. Prisoner rape survivors suffer from a host of physical and psychological problems, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and sexually transmitted disease. Rates of HIV infection are three times higher inside prisons than on the outside.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOVEMBER ADVOCATE MEETING: NOVEMBER 14, 2005: 6-8 PM

Alena Donovan, Community Education Coordinator, will present an overview on Sexual Harassment and how SBRCC presents this issue to the community. Please attend this important advocate meeting in order to accumulate one in-service hour toward the 12 hours required to maintain your certification. In December, Yesenia will give each advocate a print out of the hours you have acquired since July.

POSITION AVAILABLE AT SBRCC

Office Manager (Full-time position): Oversee use of office space and facilities; maintain an organized filing system for administrative, program and service files; provide technical support on computer systems and software to staff; and ensure facility and office equipment maintenance.

DID YOU MISS OUT?

If you had already completed your training to become an Advocate, but weren’t able to attend the Human Relations Training in March 2005, a make-up HRT has been scheduled just for you! Mark your calendars for *Tuesday, November 29th from 6:00-8:00 p.m.* A panel of presenters will lead us in exploring issues that are unique to transgender and genderqueer survivors. This training is mandatory to maintain your certification as a sexual assault counselor, and this is the last time it will be offered. Please make every effort to attend.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

Another English Crisis Intervention Training is underway, and Heather would like to get as many current Advocates as possible involved to train new volunteers. If you would like to share your experience and expertise by assisting with roleplays (either in-person or over the phone) or by participating in a panel of Advocates on November 30th, please contact Heather at 963.6832 x28 or heather@sbrcc.net.

PARKING ALERT!

Effective immediately, the management of McDonalds has asked that SBRCC staff, volunteers and clients not park in their lot, as they need the spaces for their customers. The manager has indicated that they will tow anyone who is not a patron of the restaurant. There is parking on Mason and Milpas Streets. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH!

Let your voice be heard at this year’s special election. Everyone will be asked to vote on eight propositions that are trying to change state laws. In addition, city residents will be able to vote on Santa Barbara City Council candidates. For more information about each ballot measure and this election, visit: www.easyvoter.org or www.smartvoter.org or www.ss.ca.gov/elections

NOVEMBER HOLIDAY CLOSURES

SBRCC's office will be closed to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday on Thursday, November 24th and Friday, November 25th. Of course, the 24-hour hotline will still be operational throughout the holiday.

INTRODUCTION OF OUR NEW DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

I would like to introduce myself to you. My name is Hilary Kleger and I am the new Development Director at SBRCC. I have over seventeen years of experience working to promote women's rights and to end violence against women. I have recently relocated from North Lake Tahoe where I worked for ten years with Tahoe Women' Services, a non-profit dedicated to reducing the incidence and trauma of sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse. I have also served on the Board of Directors for the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault as Vice Chair of the Council. In my new role at SBRCC, I will be focusing on fundraising through events, community foundations and donor cultivation. Bringing in additional new funding is essential to supporting the work of volunteers and staff as well as providing vital services to survivors of sexual assault. I look forward to a prosperous future and I welcome volunteers to work with me on fundraising efforts. Please contact me at 963-6832 x 35 or hilary@sbrcc.net if you are interested in assisting with fund development. I look forward to meeting each of you and I really appreciate your time and energy as a volunteer for SBRCC.

V-DAY SANTA BARBARA 2006

SBRCC will be working with community members to produce Eve Ensler's "The Vagina Monologues" at the Lobero Theater. The date is tentatively set for Friday March 17, 2006. V-Day is a global movement to stop violence against women and girls. V-Day is a catalyst that promotes creative events to increase awareness, raise money and revitalize the spirit of existing anti-violence organizations. V-Day generates broader attention for the fight to stop violence against women and girls, including rape, battery, incest, female genital mutilation (FGM) and sexual slavery. There are many volunteer opportunities including cast, crew, stage design, sponsorship, advertising and ushering. If you are interested in getting involved, please email hilary@sbrcc.net for more information.

DISMANTLING SEXISM: AN INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP

On Saturday, November 19th from 9:30am to 4:30pm, the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) is offering a one-day workshop that will help participants gain a greater understanding of gender and sexism in our society. The workshop will explore concepts of gender identity, gender socialization, and the dynamics of sexism. Participants will examine the costs of sexism, with a specific focus on the links between sexism and violence. The workshop will help participants become more effective at identifying and interrupting sexism in their daily lives. For more information, please contact Cristina or Jarrod at NCCJ at (805) 879-5225.



Happy Birthday to:



- Marcela S. on November 2nd
- Erika H. on November 13th
- Dianna H. on November 13th
- Tanya K. on November 20th
- Maria Eva C. on November 22nd