



**Sexual Assault
Prevention & Response™**

**Crisis Hotline
580 649-0656**

February 2012 NEWSLETTER



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I Will Survive: The African-American Guide to Healing from Sexual Assault and Abuse



February is African-American Heritage Month. The following excerpt is by an African American Author and Survivor of Sexual Assault. The excerpt is from Lori Robinson's book, *I Will Survive: The African-American Guide to Healing from Sexual Assault and Abuse*. The SAPR Office has a variety of resources for your educational needs. Feel free to come by the office to check out Lori Robinson's book or others we have available!

African-American women are raped at a higher rate than White women, and are less likely to report it. We have suffered in silence far too long.

Rape is not sex. It is a crime of violence. A perpetrator forces the contact of sexual body parts. It leaves you angry, ashamed, terrified, and traumatized. Though it changes you forever, you do not have to live with those feelings for the rest of your life. I should know.

On May 15, 1995, two men ran up behind me as I approached my apartment building, and one of them pointed a gun at my head. In the hour that followed, I was blindfolded, gagged, tied facedown to my bed, and raped by both.

On the first anniversary of my assault-and each anniversary since-I celebrated my life and my healing. I journeyed so far so fast toward wellness and peace because of my therapist, my boyfriend (now husband), supportive family and friends, and divine healing. That's not to say I don't still face challenges from the attack. But what was done to me no longer has power over me.

There are no easy paths, no quick fixes, for this journey. Confronting the emotional, spiritual, and sometimes physical scars of sexual violation can be a difficult, exhausting exercise. It can take years, even decades. Yet, no matter what happened to you, it is possible to become emotionally, mentally, and spiritually strong and healthy.

No race, ethnic group, or economic class is spared from sexual violence or the myths and misinformation that complicate the healing process for survivors. But in addition to our higher victimization rate, African Americans are less likely to get the help we need to heal. What's more, our community is burdened by a centuries-long history of sexual victimization and other violent abuses that continue to make the issue even more complex for us.

Discussions of the victimization of Black women are sometimes interpreted as being anti-Black men. Historically, Black men have been characterized as sexual predators. For decades after slavery ended, false reports of the rape of White women resulted in the torture and violent murder of Black men. In recent decades, studies have shown that Black men are disproportionately incarcerated for sexual assault, and are given longer sentences than White men. Unfortunately, these realities have led to a common misperception that Black women who speak out about being raped are just like those White women up through the era of the civil rights movement- trying to bring the Black man down.

Because of the pain of past and contemporary racial injustice, we live in the midst of a distorted reality with its attendant myths. First is the myth of the Black rapist terrorizing White women. Historically, interracial rape occurred frequently, but most perpetrators were not Black men. From slavery's end through the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, no southern White man was convicted of the rape or attempted rape of a Black woman, leading the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence to state in 1969 that "white males have long had nearly institutionalized access to Negro women with relatively little fear of being reported." Anyone who knows anything about American history knows that Black men were victims of racist brutality, but Black women's brutalization by White men is frequently overlooked.

Fast forward to today: Most rapists in the United States are White, educated, middle-class men. And the vast majority of rapists victimize someone of their own race.

Monthly Events

Volunteer Victim Advocate Training

Training at

Building 87 Room 125

0730hrs - 1630hrs

On the following dates:

February 22

February 24

February 27

February 29

March 7

Register on our Share point site:

<https://97amw.portal.altus.af.mil/sites/AMW/sarc/default.aspx>

**Hurts One...
Effects All...
Sexual Assault Prevention
is
Everyone's Duty**

Resources

Family Advocacy
580 481-5376

ACMI House
580 482-3800

Chaplin
580 481-7485

OKC Rape Crisis
Center
800-522-7233

National Sexual
Assault Hotline
800-656-HOPE



Continued:

The second myth under which we operate is that women often falsely accuse men of rape. In actuality, false reports of rape are quite rare. The figure often used by sexual violence experts for estimating falsified reports is 2 percent, about the same rate as other crimes. The tendency to think Black women falsely accuse Black men of rape also comes from a misunderstanding of what rape is and why it happens. The following passage accurately describes how I felt when I was assaulted:

A torturer puts his victim in a position of helplessness, makes clear to his victim that he is utterly at the torturer's mercy, breaks his will by humiliating and degrading him, and finally inflicts pain on him, usually to the most tender parts of the body. A rapist duplicates these acts.

This scenario can happen between a husband and wife, boyfriend and girlfriend, co-workers, strangers, adults, children-virtually any combination of people. In two-thirds of cases, rape is committed by someone the victim knows. And with 7 percent of offenders armed, it is less likely to involve a weapon than any other violent crime. Even if a woman goes home alone with a man she just met, that arguably poor decision does not mean she has forfeited her right not to have sex. Rapists rape because they want to gain power over someone else and because they are capable of disregarding someone else's rights and wishes. Because I was raped by strangers with a weapon, no one ever accused me of lying or suggested that I wanted it to happen. It is time for the Black community to honestly examine the issue of sexual violence so that survivors of incest, marital rape, date rape, and acquaintance rape are treated with the same compassion and sensitivity I was.

African-American anti-rape efforts are not anti-Black men. They are pro-Black people. Black men as well as Black women have much to gain from ridding our communities of sexual violence, both as potential victims and as loved ones and friends of survivors. When Black girls and boys are sexually abused, it can cause lifelong emotional problems and make them more vulnerable to abuse as adults. When Black adults are sexually assaulted, it can impede their ability to function at home, at work, and in the community. Sexual abuse or assault can hamper any survivor's ability to have healthy relationships. Sexual victimization can be the catalyst for the mildest to the most severe dysfunctions, such as low self-esteem, substance abuse, and depression.

Sexual assault and abuse is nothing new, and it is certainly not unique to African Americans or the United States. Not only is it a phenomenon found in societies throughout the world, it is used as a political tool and an act of war. During the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict in the 1990s, soldiers conducted mass rapes of Muslim women as part of an "ethnic cleansing" campaign. One European Community fact-finding team estimated that 20,000 women had been raped in less than a year. In Peru, security forces have punished civilian women perceived to be sympathetic to opposition forces by raping them. Before and during World War II, an estimated 80,000 to 200,000 women, primarily Korean, were forced into sexual slavery in military brothels for Japanese soldiers.

I've written *I Will Survive* not because African Americans are the only people affected by sexual violence, but because we are uniquely affected. Sometimes people are more comfortable working on their own challenges in culturally specific ways.

I hope survivors of all ethnicities and races benefit from reading this book. *I Will Survive* is for everyone concerned about the tragedy of sexual assault and abuse. Whether or not you have been directly touched by sexual violence, it is an issue that affects you. Incest, date rape, marital rape, stranger rape, and other types of victimization are happening in your community, no matter where you live.

I Will Survive was also written for the family and friends of survivors. Your loved one need you now more than ever. I urge you to use this book to become the best supporter you can be. People often don't know what to say or do to support survivors. Sometimes they opt to do nothing. It is not uncommon for the people a victim depends on for help to cause more harm than good with hurtful or dismissive words. You will learn how to help your loved one access needed resources and how you can effectively assist in the recovery process. You will also come to realize that you are a victim too. You will go through some of the same emotions as the survivor. You will be encouraged to get the support you need as well.

Most importantly, this book is for my fellow survivors. I offer you comfort, encouragement, and empowerment. I have provided information to help guide you through physical, emotional, and spiritual healing, as well as the criminal justice system. You will understand that the violation you suffered was not your fault, and that you are not alone. You will read the stories of survivors who have triumphed in their healing process. You will learn what to expect and how to get the services and resources you need for your own healing.

I decided to write *I Will Survive* because I want other Black victims of sexual violence to become survivors too. I want your pain to cease. I want you to thrive. I want our community to be healthy, to be safe, and to flourish.

Peace, courage, strength, and blessings,

Lori S. Robinson