

THE SOJOURNER GROUP

Advocating for Families of the Black and African Diaspora Victimized by Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

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MEDIA RELEASE

The Sojourner Group for Women of the Black and African Diaspora Advocating for Families of the Black and African Diaspora Victimized by Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

The Sojourner Group is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization that supports the mental health and wellness of marginalized women of the Black and African Diaspora who have been victimized by family violence. The mission of the Sojourner Group is to provide cultural and linguistic sensitive services; referrals, professional guidance and recovery activities for women of the African and Black Diaspora, in Utah, who have been victimized by sexual assault or domestic violence. The Sojourner Group will also provide culturally sensitive technical assistance resources to Utah law enforcement, prosecution, medical responders, and victim advocates.

As reported by the *National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS)* in 2010, approximately 1 in 5 African American women reported that they had been raped at some point in their lifetime. More specifically, 18.8% of Black women in the *National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS)* (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006) and 22% of the Black women in the *National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS)* reported rape in their lifetime. In the 2006 *National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS)*, The NISVS revealed that 41% of Black women experienced sexual coercion and other forms of unwanted sexual contact. These prevalence rates translate to an estimated 3.1 million Black rape victims and 5.9 million Black survivors of other forms of sexual violence.

How do feminist therapists, researchers, advocates, and survivors begin a dialogue about violence in the lives of Black women? The discussion often starts with the familiar tag line, 'Domestic violence is a problem that affects all women, regardless of race and social class.' This statement is true. To some extent, violence in the home, or the streets, and in the workplace is *color blind* [sic]. Race, class, and gender inequalities place Black women at an increased risk for many forms of victimization, (C.M. West, 2002)

Research consistently verifies that Black women are perceived as jezebels, welfare mothers, uncooperative, angry, loud, ugly, vindictive, and promiscuous. Social barriers, such as the historical treatment and stereotypes towards Black women, by first responders, prosecutors, medical personnel, victim advocates, and shelter services, continues to traumatize women of the Black and African Diaspora. In addition, distrust of shelter and intervention services are not often culturally or linguistically competent, leading Black women to suffer in silence.

It is important to remember that each community varies within its personalities and disposition. Each culture and community has its own set of values that may contribute to a survivor's willingness or skepticism to ask for help regarding their assault. ***Worthy of attention is to know that each community is NOT MONOLITHIC.***

Sojourner Group for Women of the Black and African Diaspora was founded as a result of these statistics, research, and one-on-one conversations with Black women in Utah looking for a place to speak openly without being pre-judged or placed in stereotypical situations of assumed guilt. Find more information on our web site at www.thesojournergroup.org



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