



MARS~

ASU~Home Safe

men advocating awareness of rape and sexism~

Arizona State University Home Safe

*“After hundreds of years of anti-racist struggle, more than ever before non-white people are currently calling attention to the primary role white people must play in anti-racist struggle. The same is true of the struggle to eradicate sexism- men have a primary role to play... in particular, men have a tremendous contribution to make... in the area of exposing, confronting, opposing, and transforming the sexism of their male peers.”*

*~bell hooks*

## Introduction~

In a national survey, 28% of college women reported a sexual experience since age 14 that met the legal definition of rape or attempted rape; 8% of college men reported perpetrating aggressive behavior which met the legal definition of rape.<sup>i</sup>

In the 2004 Uniform Crime Report, Arizona reported 1,896 completed rapes.<sup>ii</sup>

According to the National College Health Assessment 1:20 ASU Women and 1:100 ASU Men Reported experiencing an attempted or completed Sexual Assault.<sup>iii</sup>

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, fewer than 5% of completed and attempted rapes were reported to law enforcement officials.<sup>iv</sup>

In recent years, concern over the issue of violence against women has grown. As statistics illustrate, the problem of sexual violence is tremendous. However, the true concern cannot be represented by numbers or by charts, especially with the issue of under-reporting. The true concern can be seen in the eyes of all the women around us, heard in the laughter of the little girls playing down the street or can be felt as we send our daughters away to University. These numbers represent real people, with real tears and with real sorrow~ but the numbers also represent the possibility of learning how to prevent sexual violence from occurring in the first place.

It is in the spirit of promoting laughter and of healthy~ loving~ respectful relationships, Home Safe is going to promote the beginning of a M.A.R.S. (Men Advocating Awareness of Rape and Sexism) Project at Arizona State University. This is also in conjunction with Northland Family Help Center and Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff and the OASIS Program at the University of Arizona. MARS was originally founded in 1995 by a former advocate of the Aurora Center for Advocacy and Education in Minnesota. The original goal of MARS was to educate men about the relationship between rape and sexism. Since then, the organization has expanded its goals to include all violence against women and its affects on the community.

Men play an important role in every aspect of the prevention of sexual violence. Men are fathers, brothers, boyfriends, lovers, husbands, friends, sons, doctors, lawyers,

clergy, teachers and so forth. In contemporary society, men hold positions of power that can determine if prevention and intervention programs receive funding or not. Men are the other half of humanity. Their day to day reality is affected by the treatment and living conditions of the women who are in their lives. It is unfair to leave men out of the hoop of healing. It is unfair to think that men are not interested in the health of the whole community. Men are compassionate, loving, intelligent beings that are capable of understanding the vital role that they must play in the prevention of sexual violence. To include men is to believe in men.

Further, men have a direct connection to sexual violence in that they are the primary perpetrators of all violent acts. “Many people reflexively consider rape to be a women’s issue. But let’s take a closer look. What percentage of rape is committed by women? Is it 10 percent, 5 percent? No. Less than 1 percent of rape is committed by women. Let’s state this another way: over 99 percent of rape is perpetrated by men. Whether the victims are female or male, men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators.”<sup>1</sup> In order for primary prevention of sexual violence to be successful, we must include men in the preventative process~ and we must include them in an open honest way. It is impossible to shift community paradigms without bringing certain truths into light. Further, we must believe that men are strong enough to handle the truth as it does not apply to most men.

The primary purpose of the MARS Project is to prevent rape and attempted rape from happening in the lives of college students in Arizona. The project seeks to promote individual and community accountability to challenge social beliefs and behaviors that encourage sexual violence. With this mind, our programs are to be designed to increase awareness about sexual violence and to provide prevention education to all university communities willing. Further, MARS will actively work towards the increase of resources to sustain sexual violence prevention and education at Arizona State University.

The MARS Project will be a peer education program that works with men to strengthen attitudes that prevent and interrupt sexual violence. We will offer educational

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<sup>1</sup> Katz, Jackson. (2006). *The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women And How All Men Can Help*. Sourcebooks Inc., Naperville, Illinois.

workshops, coordinate community awareness events, host poster campaigns, and develop prevention strategies that are focused on Arizona culture. Through awareness-to-action education and campus organizing we will engage men as allies in an effort to transform cultures that support sexual violence.

Eventually, we would also like to form alliances with other campus organizations. The MARS peer educators will seek to network with Residential Life, DPS, the Intergroup Relations Center, the Multicultural Student Center, the Safe Zone program, the Women's Coalition, Women's Studies, Greek Life, the Athletic Department, Student Life, campus ministry, and some faculty. In the inception of the MARS Project, there is an understanding that Home Safe or the peer educators of the MARS Project are not going to succeed in the prevention of sexual violence *alone*. We must pull our community together and rally support for an issue that touches all our lives in a very real and personal way. The possibilities are endless.

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<sup>i</sup> National Center for Injury Prevention and Control Injury Fact Book 2001-2002. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2001

<sup>ii</sup> Adapted from Crime in the United States 2004: Uniform Crime Reports provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice.

<sup>iii</sup> Northern Arizona University Crime Report: October 2005  
<http://www4.nau.edu/police/G57407%20Police%20Report.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> Fisher, Bonnie, Cullen, Francis and Turner, Michal. The Sexual Victimization of College Women. U.S. Department of Justice. December:2002.