

Denim Day is a project of Peace Over Violence

The Denim Day Story

The Denim Day story begins in Italy in 1992, when an 18 year old girl is raped by her 45 year old driving instructor taking her on her very first driving lesson. He took her to an isolated road, pulled her out of the car, removed her jeans and raped her.

She reports the rape and the perpetrator is arrested and convicted. Years later, while serving his sentence, he appealed the conviction claiming that they had consensual sex. The Italian Supreme Court overturned the conviction and the perpetrator was released. The argument was that because the victim was wearing very tight jeans, she had to help him remove them, thereby implying consent.

This is where the “jeans alibi” was born.

The Denim Day Story

Enraged, women in the Italian Parliament protested by wearing jeans on the steps of the Supreme Court. Soon after, inspired California Senate and Assemblywomen did the same. In Los Angeles, Patti Giggans saw this and the rest is 20 years of history in the making...

Denim Day 101

WE ARE ON A MISSION TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND TO DISRUPT RAPE CULTURE.

Since 1999, Peace Over Violence has held its Denim Day campaign on a Wednesday in April during Sexual Assault Awareness Month, intentionally asking people to take a stand against rape culture and support survivors by wearing jeans on purpose with a purpose.

CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

- Support survivors
- Educate allies as well as unlikely allies
- Defy erroneous and destructive attitudes about sexual violence
- Reframe the conversation on sexual violence and rape culture
- Influence policy-makers, businesses and other entities

Denim Day 101

A SIMPLE ASK: WEAR JEANS

We created a safe way for people to participate – but an intentional and transformative way to make a choice to wear jeans with intention.

AN AMBITIOUS GOAL: TO DISRUPT RAPE CULTURE

We have built an uplifting campaign designed to empower people. The campaign is customizable for the workplace, community, institution, etc. We have challenged the system and inspired change.

Campaign's Impact Since 1999

EDUCATION & MOBILIZATION

Through this campaign and mobilization, both nationally and globally, we have raised awareness of sexual violence. Our contribution is giving people the tools needed to create an accessible call to action.

SILENCE BREAKING

We have helped bring sexual violence to the forefront by breaking through the silence. We have supported survivors and their voices, worked on policy, highlighted different impacted groups and communities, and recruited unlikely stakeholders.

Breaking Down Sexual Violence

WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Sexual violence is any sexual activity that is forced and nonconsensual by means of psychological coercion or physical abuse. It includes all acts of sexual violation such as sexual abuse, rape, sodomy, sexual acts committed with foreign objects, sexual harassment, touching a person's intimate parts without their consent and any other unwanted sexual activity.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse, also referred to as molestation, is usually undesired sexual behavior by one person upon another. It is often perpetrated using force or by taking advantage of another. When force is immediate, of short duration, or infrequent, sexual abuse is called sexual assault.

Breaking Down Sexual Violence

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RAPE

The terms “sexual assault” and “rape” conjure up many different images.

For this reason, it can be challenging for individuals to define them.

Sexual Assault is an umbrella term for when a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into participating in a sexual act to which she, he or they has not freely consented.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Unwanted, unwelcome sexual attention or advances. Sexual misconduct is a term often used to describe sexual harassment perpetrated by a person in a position of trust or authority.

What is Consent?

Consent is **WILLING** participation

Consent is **SPECIFIC**

Consent is **ENTHUSIASTIC**

Consent is **INFORMED**

Consent is **MUTUAL**

Consent is **ONGOING**

Consent is based on **EQUAL POWER**

Consent can be **WITHDRAWN** at any time

Consent is a **NEGOTIATION**

Consent happens without **PRESSURE** or **MANIPULATION**

Consent is **NOT PERSISTING** when someone says no (verbally or non-verbally)

What is Consent?

CONSENT IS MORE THAN “YES” OR “NO”

Agreeing or giving in to sex because of coercion or fear is not consent.

Just because someone says “yes” they want to have sex with you doesn’t mean you have consent to do whatever you want. Consent is about mutual desire so get specific!

Coercive Control

Coercive control is a strategic course of oppressive behavior designed to secure and expand gender-based privilege by depriving women of their rights and liberties and establishing a regime of domination in personal life.

Coercive control refers to abuse as a “strategic course of oppressive behavior,” meaning that:

- Behavior is rational, instrumental and not a loss of control
- Behavior is “ongoing” rather than episodic
- Behavior is based on multiple tactics like violence, intimidation, degradation, isolation and control.

Victim Blaming

Victim blaming is an umbrella term that denotes any actions or words that suggest or state that a victim of a crime--in this case of sexual nature--is to blame for what happened to them.

Rape Culture

Rape culture refers to a society or environment whose prevailing social attitudes have the effect of normalizing or trivializing sexual violence and abuse.

More often than not, it's situations in which sexual assault, rape, and general violence are ignored, trivialized, normalized, or made into jokes.

Healthy Sexuality

Sexuality is complicated; there are many factors to consider. Often people aren't completely aware of what healthy sexuality means. The list* below helps to describe some of the traits we see in healthy sexuality and healthy relationships.

INTIMACY

- Feeling of closeness
- Kindness, consideration, appreciation and support
- Takes time to build

SELF-DETERMINATION

- Ability to control one's decisions without interference
- Ability to make sexual decisions without pressure or influence

*Adapted from the Power and Control Wheel, developed at the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota.

Healthy Sexuality

CONSENT

- Willing participation
- Free from intimidation, manipulation, or fear
- Active process that involves choice

TRUST

- Knowing that your partner is being honest
- Knowing that you can be honest with your partner
- Feeling safe and confident that your partner will respect your decisions

MUTUALITY

- Shared experience of commitment and intimacy
- Inclusive decision-making process
- Reciprocal and reciprocated

Healthy Sexuality

HONESTY

- Being truthful about past sexual experiences and current relationship status
- Informing partner of sexually transmitted infections
- Being truthful about relationship intentions

COMMUNICATION

- Open exchange of information between individuals
- Two-way street -- involves listening and responding
- Open communication that increases connection

RESPECT

- Acknowledge our own and our partner's inherent value
- Hold others in high esteem
- Act in a manner that contributes to the well being of everyone

No Excuse

Denim Day aims to expose and defy the erroneous and destructive attitudes about sexual violence. Excuses allow the perpetuation of victim blaming, and upholding of rape culture in our communities. We want to relentlessly expose how we excuse rape against women, spouses, queer individuals, men, the incarcerated, the elderly, military personnel, sex workers, the disabled and other vulnerable populations.

No Excuse

We believe it is important to unpack myths and excuses provided/used around sexual assault together. When we detail the ways that rape apologists shift their justifications to fit the circumstances of each assault, we reveal that these excuses really aren't about what assault victims are wearing, or who they're dating, or what crimes they've committed in the past— it's about the systems in place that allow for the continuation of sexual violence and abuse, perpetrated against individuals. When you educate yourself on the excuses, individuals can better understand that “there is no excuse and never an invitation to rape.”

- She was wearing tight jeans
- She was flirting online
- She was his steady girlfriend
- She was drunk and partying
- He had it coming
- He assumed consent

Misconceptions, Realities, and Productive Thinking

MISCONCEPTION

Rape occurs in a dark alley by a stranger.

REALITY

Most sexual assault survivors know the perpetrator. About 70% of female rape or sexual assault survivors state the offender was an intimate partner, other relative, friend or acquaintance (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2005). This includes classmates, coworkers, dates, neighbors, caretakers, family members, husbands and boyfriends.

PRODUCTIVE THINKING

“In addition to being aware of strangers, I must recognize that people I know may pose a threat to me. With prevention education, I can watch for signs that may place me at risk.”

Misconceptions, Realities, and Productive Thinking

MISCONCEPTION

Rape is just 'rough' or 'bad' sex. What's the big deal?

REALITY

Almost half of all survivors of rape are fearful of serious injury or death during the rape. Rape is a violent assault that is acted out sexually which affects an individual's sense of safety and control. Rape survivors are nine times more likely than victims of other crimes to attempt suicide.

PRODUCTIVE THINKING

"Even though rape is acted out sexually, I must remember that it is a violation and is about power and control. It has potentially life changing effects and should be taken seriously."

Misconceptions, Realities, and Productive Thinking

MISCONCEPTION

Women ask to be raped because of the way they dress or act.

REALITY

This attitude holds survivors of sexual assault accountable for the violence perpetrated against them. No one asks or deserves to be raped. Rape does not happen in response to provocative clothing or behavior. Rape happens because the perpetrator decides that his desires are more important than the victim's right to self determination. A life free from sexual violence is a basic human right that should be accorded to all members of our society.

PRODUCTIVE THINKING

“Dressing in attractive ways or indicating to someone that you like them is not an invitation to be sexually violated.”

Misconceptions, Realities, and Productive Thinking

MISCONCEPTION

It's okay for a man to force a woman to have sex with him if she gets him turned on.

REALITY

This attitude suggests that men are not capable of controlling their sexual behavior. It further suggests that women must ultimately bear the responsibility for men's violent behavior. This is simply not true; people are able to control themselves when they choose to do so. If a person chooses to act out violently against another, that person must be held accountable.

PRODUCTIVE THINKING

“If I engage in sexual intimacy, I cannot force or coerce my partner into doing anything, and I must take responsibility for my own actions. If I chose not to participate, my partner's sexual urges are not my responsibility.”

Misconceptions, Realities, and Productive Thinking

MISCONCEPTION

Women only cry rape to get back at men they are mad at or because they don't want to admit having sex.

REALITY

False rape charges are not frequently made. According to the Department of Justice, one in every 2.7 million heterosexual males will have a false claim made against them.

PRODUCTIVE THINKING

“Because of the way society treats rape victims, most people would not put themselves in a position to be ridiculed, demeaned, and subject to public scrutiny if it were not true.”

Misconceptions, Realities, and Productive Thinking

MISCONCEPTION


Men can never be sexually assaulted.

REALITY

Men can be and are sexually assaulted. One in six men have experienced sexual violence before the age of 18.

PRODUCTIVE THINKING

“Anyone can be sexually assaulted. Women and men from the very young to the elderly, people of all ethnicities, socioeconomic levels and all sexual orientations are sexually assaulted.”



**DENIM
DAY**
EST. 1999

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#DENIMDAY

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24 Hour Rape and Battering Hotlines

LOS ANGELES

213 . 626 . 3393

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NATIONAL

800 . 656 . HOPE

**PEACE
OVER
VIOLENCE**
ONE ON ONE, ONE BY ONE

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peaceoverviolence.org