

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence

November 25 - December 10, 2008



A Guide to Getting Involved for New Activists

If you are new to the 16 Days Campaign this document offers a few suggestions of how you can get involved. You may find it useful to refer to the 16 Days bibliography for background resources as you consult this document for activity ideas. Please inform the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) of which actions you found particularly useful and provide examples of activities that were especially effective in your campaign. Write to us with any suggested activities, and please report your activities and send pictures and samples of your campaign materials to CWGL for inclusion in the 2008 International Calendar of Activities and the archives. Thank you!

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1 Educate Yourself

Awareness is a critical component in ending violence against women. Many acts of violence and discrimination are perpetuated by societal norms and behaviors that remain unchallenged. In order to overcome stereotypes and taboos it is important to gain knowledge about one's rights and how one can access those rights. Many women remain in cycles of violence because they have not been empowered with the tools and knowledge to break out of these cycles, often they do not even know that they have a right to live free from violence and discrimination. Some ways in which you can build knowledge are:

- Talk to a community based organization that works to prevent VAW
- Access information available on the internet and in resource centers
- Approach your local government and request information on national laws that exist to protect women from acts of violence and discrimination
- Talk to your family, friends and colleagues about the issue

2 Spread the Word

The movement to end violence against women has grown and flourished in the past decade. It is important to share this knowledge and information with others. Some ways of spreading the word include:

- Share information and discuss views with your family members, friends and colleagues
- Host or run an awareness raising workshop in your community
- Direct others towards free resources on how they can better protect themselves from acts of violence and discrimination and how they can play a role in preventing these acts from being perpetrated and accepted
- Challenge viewpoints and stereotypes of others who may accept acts of violence against women as societal norms or as a way of life
- Offer facts and information from a gender sensitive perspective where these ideas are not prevalent

3 Organize an Event or Activity

If you want to engage proactively in the 16 Days Campaign, you might consider hosting an event or activity this year. To do this you can:

- Use the theme *Human Rights for Women ↔ Human Rights for All* as a way of reminding those around you that universal human rights cannot be realized without universal human rights for women
- Consider using some of the key demands outlined by CWGL and add your own demands to this list
- Reach out and collaborate with other organizations or networks in your community
- Host an international event where you invite activists from around your country, region or the world to participate
- Open the event to the public so that more people gain knowledge and awareness of why it is important to challenge all forms of violence and discrimination against women
- Invite the media to attend and give coverage to your event

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Join a Network or Listserve

Activism can occur in any space by any person who is willing to take on the issue, gain knowledge and information, and then communicate and share that information with others. It is useful to join a network or a listserv in order to network with likeminded individuals and to become aware of what is going on in your area as well as in national and international settings. Some ways you can join a listserv or network include:

- Research what groups are active in your local area and if they have a newsletter you can subscribe to
- Become a local member of an organization that has chapters and that campaigns to end violence against women
- Attend events and speak to those who organize and participate in such events
- You can join the 16 Days listserv today by emailing us at 16days@cwgl.rutgers.edu and requesting to be added

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Invite Men and Boys to Participate in 16 Days Events and Activities

Realizing a world that respects women's human rights and is free from violence against women requires shifting the behaviors and attitudes that perpetrators hold toward the use and acceptance of violence and discrimination against women. Reaching out to men and including them in campaigning activities and awareness raising helps to address the use of violence as a means of threatening, controlling or subordinating women. Developing a healthier masculinity that condemns violence requires men to take active responsibility for ending it. Some ways you can reach out to engage men and boys this 16 Days include:

- Take them to a 16 Days event or activity with you
- Talk to them about the issue. For example you can share testimony given by women who have suffered from violence, which is available in the publications and on the websites of organizations working to end VAW
- Talk to men and boys about how violence against women has impacted their lives
- Encourage men to be pro-active and proud in standing up and speaking out when acts of violence against women are committed
- Discuss the causes and perpetuating factors of men's violence against women, often deeply embedded in social and economic norms, policies and practices and expose how these can be overcome through a multi-level approach, including positive action by men
- Ask them to sign the *Every Human Has Rights* Campaign pledge

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Lobby Your Government

Holding governments and policy makers accountable for delivering on women's human rights is crucial. While international pressure is useful, it is equally important for there to be a strong domestic lobby that demands State response to the needs of women and to their obligations to respect, protect and fulfill women's human rights. Many different actors can be targeted in campaigns, but heads of state or cabinet members seem to be the most popular targets. However, it is also good to consider other actors such as your local government

representative, your embassy human rights officers or even respected community members and leaders. When lobbying your governments:

- Ensure that your means of communication is the most effective way of attracting your audience's attention; consider a variety of options including writing letters, organizing protests, circulating a petition or having a public event
- Make certain that women's groups and survivors of violence are engaged so your lobbying remains representative of the needs on the ground
- Offer a roadmap of how policy change can be implemented by governments
- Remind states that they are bound by international human rights law to ensure that all persons are able to enjoy their fundamental human rights. Check if your government is a state party to all human rights conventions and covenants and if they are not then lobby them to ratify these treaties without reservations. Especially important conventions and covenants are: the Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its optional protocols, the Convention against Torture (CAT), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), The Convention for the Rights of the Child (CRC), Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (known as the Human Rights Defenders Declaration) and the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

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Volunteer With an Anti-VAW Organization

One of the best ways to learn more about the impact and consequences of violence against women, as well as how to end it, is by engaging with organizations that work with women who have experienced violence. A good way to start is to volunteer with a local organization working on VAW:

- Many organizations working on VAW welcome volunteers and are often flexible about work days and hours
- Visit organizations in your community and inquire about volunteer opportunities or check on their websites
- Hands on work with survivors of violence is a useful way to learn about the challenges and commitment that are involved in working to end VAW

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Engage with the Media

Print, radio, television and virtual media sources continue to play a major role in shaping opinions and in communicating issues of importance to audiences. It is important for activists to engage with the media both as a target and also as a conduit for carrying campaigning messages and knowledge about women's human rights. Some ways you can actively engage with and help shape media coverage on violence against women include:

- Write opinion pieces in your local newspaper on incidents of violence that have occurred or on state policies and procedures that have a direct impact on the prevalence of violence against women (Note: if you face any risk of threats or harassment you can write in anonymously or use fictional names). It is important to critique bad policies and reactions as well as to write in support of good measures and best practices

- If you host an event during the 16 Days, invite the media to cover this event to highlight your work and why ending violence against women is important
- If you are aware of media outlets that are particularly favorable to covering women's issues, you can approach them with the idea of running a special series on the 16 Days. You can also see if they are willing to do a special program on one of the significant dates, such as International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women, World AIDS Day, International Women Human Rights Defenders Day or Human Rights Day
- If you are aware of media outlets that are biased in their approach to violence against women, write and encourage them to take on a more gender-sensitive approach
- Target mainstream news sources that cover local, national and global news as well as media outlets that are not strong on communicating about women's rights and those popular culture media outlets that are listened to by youth

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Commemorate international dates

The 16 Days Campaign is designed to highlight violence against women as a human rights violation and to build a bridge between women's rights movements and the human rights framework. Activists, organizations and networks participating in the 16 Days of Activism are encouraged to commemorate key international dates during the 16-day time period. See the document "Key Dates" for a full list of dates within the 16 days and a description of their significance.

- 25 November: International Day for the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women
- 29 November: International Women Human Rights Defenders Day
- 1 December: World AIDS Day
- 3 December: International Day of Disabled Persons
- 6 December: Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre
- 10 December: Human Rights Day & 60th anniversary of the UDHR!

Groups are encouraged to organize events and activities that fall on these key dates and that highlight their significance vis-à-vis violence against women. Please also keep an eye out for our International Calendar of Events due to be posted by late October that provides information about activities around the world during the 16 Days of Activism. If you are planning events on these key dates or at any other time during the 16 Days, please let us know!

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