



The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence provides a critical voice for sexual assault advocates in Washington, D.C.

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Against Backdrop of Appalling Events Nation Begins Dialogue about Sexual Violence**

It's been over 20 years since Robin Warsaw published her historic book, "I Never Called it Rape," to raise awareness about the reality of acquaintance rape. It's also been over 20 years since the brutal Pike (Pi Kappa Alpha) gang rape at Florida State University ended in the first known successful prosecution of a fraternity gang rape.

"Despite two decades of advocacy, prevention, awareness, marches and testimonials, campuses continue to be dangerous places for young women, acquaintance rape remains a very real threat, and young men continue to act out the violent and sexist messages they've absorbed from the culture since birth," said National Alliance to End Sexual Violence President Monika Johnson Hostler.

On October 8th, 12 young people, most of them young women who attend Central Washington University, were rushed to the hospital after a mass overdose on Rohypnol. None of the young women had more than one or two drinks before becoming violently ill. Detectives are now investigating whether they were given spiked drinks to render them defenseless against a sexual assault.

On October 14<sup>th</sup>, Yale's *Broad Recognition Magazine* reported an incident that happened the night of the 13th: *Beginning around 9:30 pm, members of the DKE fraternity marched with their pledges around Yale's Old Campus (the home of almost all of Yale's freshman women) chanting slogans such as "No means yes, yes means anal" and "My name is Jack, I'm a necrophiliac, I f— dead women, and fill them with my semen."*

The fraternity has since apologized and cooperated with the Women's Center at a forum on sexual assault. But women still had to experience horribly abusive language making light of real fears and the traumatic experiences of survivors. The question remains why universities and colleges don't act more swiftly with serious sanctions.

And it's not as if fraternities have room to joke. In her 1992 book, *Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood and Privilege on Campus*, Peggy Reeves Sanday pointed out that the culture of sexual violence around fraternities is very real, as evidenced by both past and recent events. In fact, the *Gainesville Sun* reported earlier in October that University of Florida police were investigating an alleged rape at the Tau Epsilon Phi fraternity house.

“This behavior of college men is a symptom of a larger societal problem—we have not agreed as a nation that women must have sexual autonomy. Advocates are exhausted and hoarse from saying it, but our nation must make a collective decision to take a long hard look at the underpinnings of sexual violence,” said Terri Poore, National Alliance to End Sexual Violence Policy Chair.

While there's plenty of bad news this October, advocates and survivors have reason to keep hope alive. The Obama Administration has taken unprecedented steps to prioritize the issue of sexual assault. The President signed the first ever Sexual Assault Awareness Month Proclamation in April of 2009; recommended doubling funding for rape crisis services; and appointed an advisor on violence against women, Lynn Rosenthal, who has exemplified the Administration's commitment to ending sexual violence. The Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) director, Judge Susan Carbon, has made sexual assault and prevention top priorities by launching a **national campaign to reduce sexual violence in the United States**. Today, The White House Council on Women and Girls and the Department of Justice held the first ever national roundtable on sexual violence at the White House. Over the next six months, OVW will hold regional forums around the country to engage the public in their sexual assault reduction campaign.

“Against the backdrop of these appalling events, with all we've learned along the way and a new commitment at the highest levels of government, ending sexual violence is finally becoming a national priority,” said Monika Johnson Hostler President of the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence.

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*The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV) works to end sexual violence and ensure services for victims. The NAESV Board of Directors consists of leaders of state sexual assault coalitions and national law, policy, and tribal experts who promote the organization's mission to advance and strengthen public policy on behalf of state coalitions, individuals, and others working to end sexual violence. Most importantly, the NAESV advocates on behalf of the victim/survivors – women, children and men – who have needlessly suffered the serious trauma of sexual violence and envisions a world free from sexual violence.*