

be bold be brave be red

stop the violence

On September 20th, I wore black. I wore black, as many Black people did, in solidarity with the Jena 6, who are quickly becoming the 21st century's Scottsboro Boys. I am wearing black, even though I have the profound urge and desire to wear red, a Maoist, seductive, bold red – on this, the possible new dawn, of what Al Sharpton has begun calling the “Civil Rights Movement of the 21st Century.” I am wearing black, even as I have conflicting thoughts and emotions. I am eager for this moment of solidarity - a chance to acknowledge the injustice of inequitable sentencing. So, for today, it is my lipstick that is crimson.

But on Wednesday October 31, 2007 I will be wearing red; that uncomfortably womanish shade of scarlet that suggests a certain looseness, appreciation of blues, likelihood to walk the streets at night, willingness to be loud, dedication to self, and a deep refusal to be rendered invisible. Red, the color so many of us are told to avoid, because of its Western association, with the marked, fallen woman; red, that rich, rapturous, full, so-bright-it-looks-as-if-it's-had-a-good-meal ruby color, red so intense, it's nearly purple. Yes, that color – that's the one I want to mark my outrage at the rape and torture of Megan Williams, a 20-year old woman in West Virginia; the sexual assault of a Haitian woman and her son in West Palm Beach, Florida; and the continued violence visited upon women of color.

Red is the color I choose, because I am not interested in being invisible. I am not interested in being forgotten. I am not interested in being a sidebar conversation. I am not interested, because I will be the womyn who walks into the room wearing the color red, who makes the conversation stop, and gently suggests another topic – the role of violence and abuse in women's lives perhaps? I am interested in being seen. I am interested in hearing what communities of color, so recently outfitted in black to mark the injustice done to the Jena 6, will do to mark the violence and injustice done to Megan Williams.

For me, the color red is about boldness. It is a vibrant color that cannot be ignored. Beyond the pink of feminism, and even the purple of womanism, red is a color that says, “stop and see.” On October 31st, we ask women of color and their allies, to break the silence and invisibility surrounding violence against women of color, by choosing to be seen. By choosing to be vocal, to be brave, to be bold and work to stop violence against women.

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We are asking organizations and individuals to host rallies and speak outs on Wednesday, October 31, 2007 at various monumental sites (i.e. The Lincoln Memorial, Seattle's Arch, Chicago's Bean, Atlanta's MLK memorial, etc.) located in their cities or to host rallies and speak outs at locations that represent the political, economic, and/or social power of their cities such as the local court house, the local chamber of commerce, the local police department, and the local city council. Groups can also consider rallying in sites where specific violence against women of color occurred. Hosting a rally dedicated to eradicating violence against women of color at the locations where business is conducted, where laws are made, and where justice is rendered is revolutionary. It demands that laws be written specifically to protect women of color from violence. It demands funding to be made available to women of color organizations who work to end violence against women of color. It demands that justice be served by compelling city leaders to create spaces in the city where women of color are safe.

Use the below agenda for your gathering:

- Host of gathering should **welcome participants**.
- Participants should **decorate the location** or rally with red. Participants should where red. Note: please try to use environmentally friendly materials!
- **Light a candle**. If you'd like you can ask all participants to come with a candle.
- **Read Out of Silence, We Come** litany at 8 p.m. CST. You can have one person serve as the reader, or, ask the group to read the litany together. Across the country, women will be reading with you. We will not be silent! **The litany is on the next page.**
- Ask participants to begin to **share their stories**. Allow at least 30 minutes for participants to share their stories.
- Celebrate this moment of community! **Take a picture or video clip** and send it to beboldbered@gmail.com so that we can document the silence together.

- **Important Side notes:**
 - We understand that October 31, 2007 is Halloween. For most families it's a time to be with their children. Even though Halloween is about "fake" and "imagined" terrors, the violence committed against women of color is very "real." Not only is it a "real" reality on October 31st, but it's also a "real" terror for the rest of the year.

 - We also understand that it may be difficult for some women of color to share their stories of violence and we respect their decision not to document the silence.

 - We also understand that the coalition of women who are working on the be bold, be brave campaign are an ad hoc group dedicated to amplifying and making more visible the work that so many women of color organizations engage in daily to end violence against women of color.

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Individuals, organizations, and communities that are committed to acknowledging and resisting the violence visited on women of color every day are encouraged to read this statement aloud on Wednesday October 31, 2007 at 8:00 p.m./Central time.

Out of the Silence, We Come: A Litany

Out of the silence, we come
In the name of *nuestras abuelas*,
In honor of our mamas
In the spirit of our *petit fils*,
In tribute to ourselves

We come crying out
Documenting the torture
We come wailing
Reporting the rape
We come singing
Testifying to the abuse
We come knowing
Knowing that the silence has not protected us from
the racism
the sexism
the homophobia
the physical pain
the emotional shame
the auction block

Once immobilized by silence
We come now, mobilized by collective voice
Dancing in harmonious *move*-ment to the thick drumbeat of *la lucha*, the struggle
We come indicting those who claim to love us, but violate us
 We come prosecuting those who are paid to protect us, but harass us
 We come sentencing those who say they represent us, but render
 us invisible

Out of the Silence, we come
Committed to naming ourselves
Committed to telling our stories
Committed to fighting for our lives
Remembering that we were never meant to survive