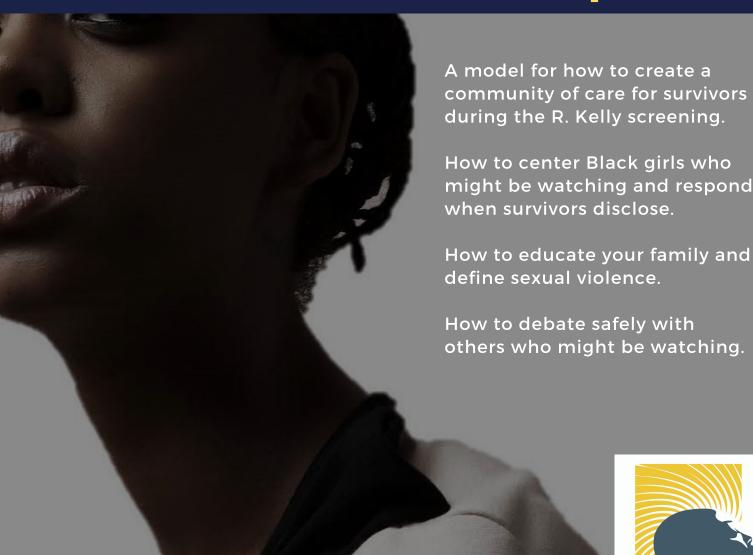
### **Black Women's Blueprint**



BEYOND LIGHTS,
CAMERA, ACTION
& SURVIVING R. KELLY
VIEWING PARTIES

A FIRST OF MANY GUIDES FOR ADDRESSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN BLACK COMMUNITIES

## HOW TO SUPPORT THE SURVIVORS OF R. KELLY AND ALL SURVIVORS

Dear Survivor,

To all those who have survived sexual exploitation at the hands of older men among other harm-doers; those who survived sex trafficking, rape, sexual abuse and sexual assault or any other form of violation along the continuum of categories of sexual violence reserved primarily for those identifying as women and girls, Black Women's Blueprint writes you in solidarity. We write you in support and in sisterhood. Many of us are survivors ourselves and/or come from families of survivors all over the Black Diaspora. We are on constant journeys toward healing, toward rewriting our personal narratives, toward reclaiming our bodies and ourselves. We know all too well what you're going through. For that reason, we write you this public letter.

This letter is to the girls and women who received the bomb threat at the R. Kelly film screening Tuesday, Dec. 4, 2018. It is not the advocates who took to social media who were most impacted by the terror inflicted that night, it is you the survivors whose speaking continues to demand we all make a change, and we honor that. It is not the voice of the most privileged who the deterrers sought to silence that night, it is the voices of sister-survivors of sexual assault—including those snatched up from community school yards, dance floors and shopping malls. This letter is for the many of us who know what it means to be left in building hallways and staircases, backroom parties, in heaps on their bedroom or living room floors, the back of recording studios, and building basements.

Our prayer is that you know and understand you did nothing to cause this violence against you. You had the right to a live in a society that protects your life, your sexual health and emotional growth from childhood to adulthood. You and all of us should have the right to do as we please: fall in love, admire, enjoy time, and even strip naked if we feel inclined and still be safe, still exist and still thrive in environments that considers yours and our inherent value and where those bent on inflicting harm are stopped in their tracks. You, as the human being that you are, should always be honored. Your sexual agency is not license to exploit you. Your ability to consent should always be assessed and respected. You bear no responsibility for any sexual violence or coercion against you and therefore, no matter what the public says, the blame is not yours.

Sisters you are not alone. What you choose to do for yourself from this moment on should be the focus and priority. You have a multitude of people worldwide behind you, at your left and at your right, in front of you and for sure under your feet as you stand on the shoulders of the fiercest warriors whom across centuries have fought to end sexual violence.

We FIGHT for you and for us, until there is peace. With militant and abiding love, Black Women's Blueprint

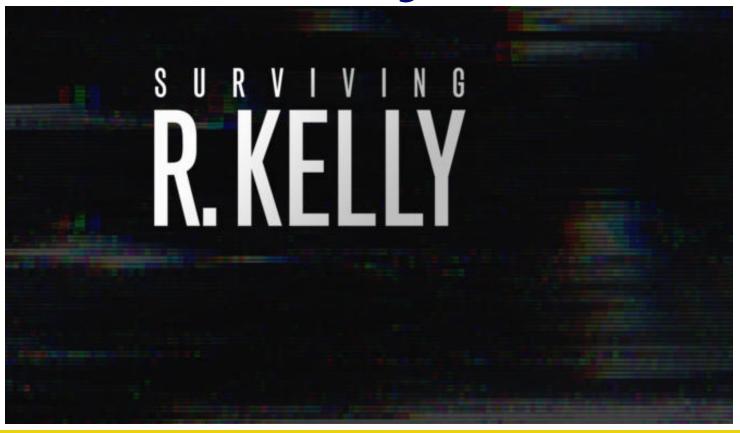
(There is a fuller letter for you at www.MamaBlack.org as this letter is abbreviated)



### **BEGIN BY BELIEVING**

- As the first responder, it is import that support be given to the person disclosing abuse regardless of her/his/their emotional response in the moment of disclosure.
- The first responder's actions and attitude is critical to the way in which the survivor copes with the trauma and to the length of time it may take to recover.
- Survivors must be treated with respect and be offered unconditional support.

# Surviving R. Kelly Presented by LIFETIME



In the ground-breaking documentary series "Surviving R. Kelly," women are emerging from the shadows and uniting their voices to share their stories. Celebrated as one of the greatest R&B singers of all time, R. Kelly's genre defining career and playboy lifestyle has been riddled with rumors of abuse. predatory behavior, and pedophilia. Despite damning evidence and multiple witnesses, to date, none of these accusations have seemingly affected him. For the first time ever, survivors and people from R. Kelly's inner circle, are coming forward with new allegations about his sexual, mental, and physical abuse. They are now finally ready to share their full story and shed light on the secret life the public has never seen.

With over 50 interviews including civil rights activist Tarana Burke, musicians John Legend and Sparkle, talk-show host and former DJ Wendy Williams, ex-wife Andrea Kelly, ex-girlfriend Kitti Jones, brothers Carey and Bruce Kelly, and many others, the true story of R. Kelly's controversial past will be revealed beginning in 1970 through present day, shedding light on the R&B star whose history of alleged abuse of underage African American girls has, until recently, been largely ignored by mainstream media. "Surviving R. Kelly" is executive produced by dream hampton, Tamara Simmons, Joel Karlsberg and Jesse Daniels for Kreativ Inc. which has a production deal with Bunim/Murray Productions (BMP), and Brie Miranda Bryant from Lifetime.

## WHO WE ARE



The Conveners of the First Black Women's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on rape and sexual violence.

Black Women's Blueprint is a national Black feminist organization that uses civil and human rights approaches to organize and develop a culture where women of African descent are fully empowered. We are the Founders of the Institute for Gender and Cultural Competency for training, prevention and intervention and conveners of the first Black Women's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Sexual Violence in the U.S.





- Survivors make up 100% of Black Women's Blueprint's leadership and the majority of its membership.
- Connect someone with our powerful and outspoken community of care.
- Nominate yourself and/or recommend a survivor (with their permission) for leadership Email: info@blueprintny.org

# HOW TO BE IN COMMUNITY AND IN BLACK SPACES WHILE VIEWING THE SERIES

**Hydrate** - Hydrating has been known to reduce the intensity of anxiety and stress, and water had natural calming properties. Note: If you are not a water person consider infusing your water with lemons or strawberry. Either way have some water present for this screening.

**Take Deep Breaths -** Breathing is essential. First, take a normal breath. Then try a deep breath: Breathe in slowly through your nose, allowing your chest and lower belly to rise as you fill your lungs. Let your abdomen expand fully. Now breathe out slowly through your mouth (or your nose, if that feels more natural). Taken from Harvard Health publishing Harvard Medical school.

**Don't Be Afraid To Press Pause -** Taking breaks also relieves mental pressures. It is a time to reset your mind, body and by removing yourself from the thing that is pressuring, you will get a different perspective of the situation.

**Educate Yourself** - #MeToo has inspired many to want to work with sexual assault survivors. Use this opportunity to engage in self-education about sexual assault. Know that understanding sexual assault and its impact on survivors does not occur overnight or with one workshop. It takes years and there is always something to learn.

**Prepare for Those Who Might Want to Debate the Issue -** You have the right to disengage with persons whose goal it is to defend sexual assault, dismiss sexual abuse and promote victim blaming.

**Call Out Victim Blaming** - If it is safe to do so, name victim blaming and call out rape culture. Engage only in mutually respectful dialogue.

**Educate Community/Understand Cultural Trauma-** Discuss oppression. Dispel myths that all persons who are abused will grow up to be sexually exploitative or sexually victimize others.

## HOW SEXUAL VIOLENCE IS DEFINED IN THE MAINSTREAM

### Sexual Assault

Unwanted sexual contact that stops short of rape or attempted rape. This includes sexual touching and fondling.

### **Sexual Violence**

Sexual Violence is an umbrella term that is used socially. Sexual Violence occurs anytime someone does anything of a sexual nature (verbal or physical) without the expressed consent of another person. The continuum of sexual violence includes, but is not limited to acts or attempted acts of rape, incest, child sexual abuse, ritual abuse, non-stranger rape, statutory rape, marital or partner rape, sexual exploitation, unwanted sexual contact, sexual harassment, exposure, voyeurism, stalking, trafficking, etc.

### Rape

Rape is often defined as forced sexual intercourse, including: vaginal anal, or oral penetration. Penetration by a sex organ or object of any sort is rape.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Ongoing sexually violent activity; Sexual abuse includes asking, coercing or pressuring a person in engaging in sexual activities (regardless of the outcome). When the victim is under the age of 18 sexual abuse is referred to as child sexual abuse.

### **Child Sexual Abuse**

Child sexual abuse is any form of asking, pressuring or engaging a child in sexual activities (regardless of the outcome); Indecent exposure (of the genitals, female nipples, etc.) with intent to gratify oneself sexually, to intimidate or groom a child for sexual activity; Physical and/or sexual contact with a child, using a child to produce child pornography.

### **Sex Trafficking**

The illegal trade of human beings for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. This is induced by force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of sexual exploitation. For the purpose of this training, we are focusing on Sex Trafficking which occurs in the United States where offenders and victims are American born citizens.

#### **Incest**

Incest is sexual contact between close relatives. The term may apply to sexual activities between: individuals of close "blood relationship"; members of the same household; step relatives related by adoption or marriage.

# WHAT IS BLACK WOMEN'S BLUEPRINT'S STANCE ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

- Sexual violence is a violation of human rights.
- For many Black women and girls, sexual violence exists on a continuum, across the life-span and across generations.
- The history of sexual violence against Black women in the U.S. is a history of racism and sexism intertwined.
- Addressing gender-based violence in Black communities is central to the achievement of racial justice, as well as peaceful and viable communities where state and interpersonal violence are equally prioritized.
- Sexual violence is about the abuse of power, no matter what the status of the person committing the assault. It is possible to be oppressed and still oppress others.
- Restoring Black men to the Black family/ performing "nuclear families" will not end misogyny or end sexual assault. We know that historically Black families have taken many formations.
- The prison industrial complex creates more of a culture of violence, does not make us feel safer, or reduce violence.
- We should use the language offered by "survivors" or "victims". Survivors define their own experience and their status.
- In sexual violence cases, men were found to be the harm-doer 96% of the time, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Thus, solutions require men's involvement.
- There are many root causes to sexual violence and many solutions.







### ABOUT INTRA-COMMUNITY SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- Pressure to not report intra-communal sexual assault, and a hostile environment and attitude toward those who do report, are some of the biggest barriers Black survivors face.
- Approximately 9 of 10 survivors reaching out to Black Women's Blueprint, report to our counselors that they have never disclosed the sexual assault to anyone in family, community or police systems before coming to BWB.
- Intra-community sexual violence can be articulated within Black communities as inextricably linked to a particular historical context, a context which often solidly informs and shapes the personal and political within our communities.
- Fear of retribution within the community, and of facing possible consequences of reporting rape
  or abuse, related to Black men's vulnerability to police brutality, stop & frisks, plus the reality of
  high incarceration rates. All of these reinforce "silence in community on this issue" and often
  result in under-reporting from Black victims of sexual assault.



### WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE

Young Black survivors negotiate seeking justice and healing from their experiences at the intersection of race, sexuality, class and gender, etc. They often strive to adhere to codes of loyalty and protection of communal/community relationships instead of reporting due to pressing threats predicated on historical disenfranchisement and marginalization. There is also a tendency in our communities to point to systemic failures experienced by those who cause harm/abuse. These narratives too often immobilize communities and families from taking even the most basic steps to prevent sexual abuse OR hold harm doers accountable at the familial or communal levels. Such silence, among other factors, and lack of action creates the perfect storm for harm-doers to continue to assault.

## HOW TO ENGAGE BLACK MEN AND BLACK COMMUNITIES

From Ahmad Greene Hayes, Founder, Children of Combahee, BWB Member

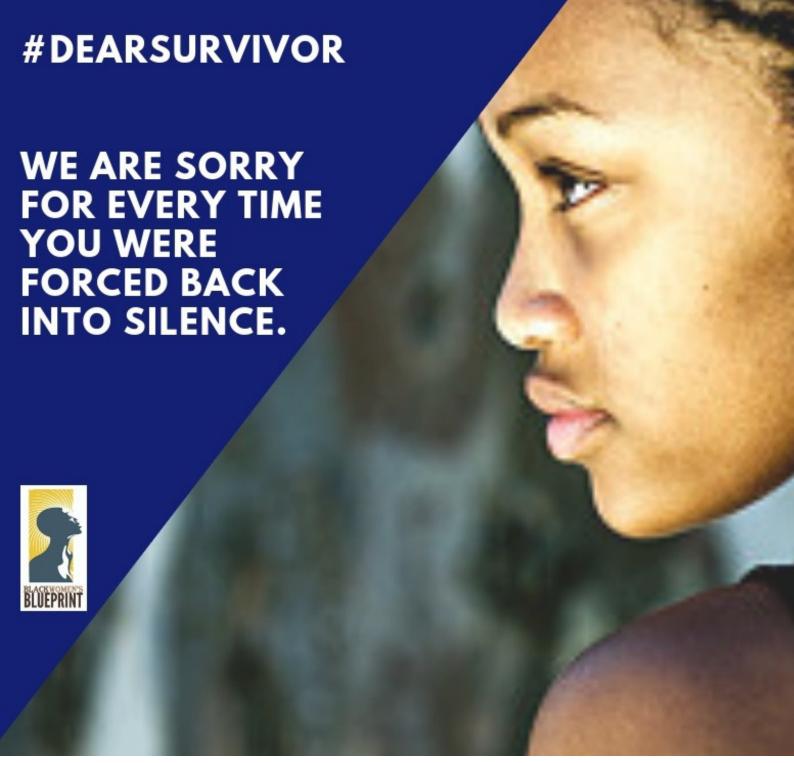
- In order for there to be a Black future where all Black people are thriving, Black men must be anti-rape activists with Black feminist and womanist political sensibilities.
- We must gather in our living rooms and discuss what we will do to stop rape in our communities.
- Black men cannot do the work of standing with Black women, femmes, and girls, until they are willing to confront themselves, look in the mirror, and take off their suits. The suits that constrain us into respectability, hypermasculinity, homo- and transphobia, sexism and misogyny, and sexually violent behaviors. Given what we know about most Black communities and about sexual violence more broadly, Black women's assailants and harm-doers are more-oft-than-not Black men in their families, schools, churches, and communities.
- In the midst of a Trump presidency and the Black Lives Matter movement, it is imperative that Black men get on board with not only racial justice, but also anti-rape activism.
- Understanding the root, the toxic root of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, means that Black men must always care about and advocate alongside black women and girls.
- Black men need to hold each other accountable for ending sexual sexual violence in Black communities.
- While rape and sexual assault are universal issues, we know the
  experience of black women and girls with sexual violence is emblematic
  of a greater need for American society to abandon, once and for all, moldy
  old tropes about females and sexual attention.
- Black women are owed accountability and support from everyone in the Black community.
- Black community members must be active bystanders in intervening when sexual violence is a threat to any person in their neighborhood, community or home.

### HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE RESISTANCE TO ADDRESS SEXUAL ASSAULT

**SEXUAL ASSAULT** is any unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature that occurs without consent from individuals or under threat or coercion. Whether by an acquaintance or by a stranger, sexual assault can occur against a person's will, or when a person is incapable of giving consent. By law sexual assault includes rape (sexual intercourse without the consent of both parties) including sodomy, oral copulation, sexual assault with an object, sexual battery, forcible fondling (e.g., unwanted touching or kissing for purposes of sexual gratification), or threat of sexual assault, etc. A person is legally incapable of giving consent if under 18 years of age, intoxicated by drugs and/or alcohol, developmentally disabled, or mentally or physically unable to do give consent.

U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics recently estimated that 91% of U.S. rape victims are female and 9% are male, with 99% of the offenders being male. In one survey of women, only two percent of respondents who stated they were sexually assaulted said that the assault was perpetrated by a stranger.

WHAT ARE RAPE MYTHS: Rape myths exist for many different purposes. They exist in order to make people feel safe and maintain a view of the world that is orderly and comfortable. For instance, if one believes that rape only happens to women or others who do not resist "enough", it is easy for the believer to feel no responsibility and no need to consider the impact. This type of myth provides a false sense of security for many people. Other myths exist to maintain the present inequality between genders and fuels male supremacy. As an illustration, the myth that men only rape as a result of frustration or anger at societal oppression (especially in the context of the U.S.) allows people to place blame on anything other than the rapist. The myth that girls who wear revealing clothing are more likely to be raped, allows people to believe that wearing revealing clothing provokes men to rape. Rape myths, unfortunately, are prevalent in our society and they are untrue, counterproductive and sustain a culture where rape is seen by many as excusable. This and other factors make it more and more difficult to hold people who commit sexual assault accountable.



**MYTH:** If a person goes to someone's room or house or goes to a bar, they assume the risk of being sexually assaulted. If something happens later, they can't claim that they were raped or sexually assaulted because they should have known not to go to those places.

**FACT:** This "assumption of risk" wrongfully places the responsibility of the harm-doer's actions with the survivor. Even if a person went voluntarily to someone's residence, hotel or room and consented to engage in some sexual activity, it does not serve as blanket consent for all sexual activity. If a person is unsure about whether the other person is comfortable with an elevated level of sexual activity, the person should stop and ask. When someone says "No" or "Stop", "I don't know", "I'm not sure", "wait", "slow down", or any such language verbalized or not, that means STOP. Sexual activity forced upon another without consent is sexual assault. Ask and seek consent.

# HOW TO UNPACK SEXUAL ASSAULT MYTHS VS. FACTS: THE MYTHS WE OFTEN DEBATE IN COMMUNITY

**MYTH:** Rape is a crime of sex/rapist are motivated by an overwhelming, unfulfilled sexual desire.

**FACT:** Rape is not about sexual desire. It is a crime of power disguised as sex. Myths confusing rape with sex or unfulfilled sexual desire are detrimental.

**MYTH:** When it comes to Black men, they rape because they feel powerless. **FACT:** Rape is an abuse of power. It is a tool to exert and maintain power over another person. Using power might mean using force, using violence, using threats, or using deceit, coercion, exploitation, crazy making, etc.

MYTH: Only women are raped.

**FACT:** All genders experience rape. Men are raped, women are raped. Gender non-conforming people are raped. Trans-identified people are raped.

MYTH: Women secretly want to be sexually assaulted.

**FACT:** Society in some ways minimizes or glamorizes rape, desensitizes us to the atrocity of it, or shifts the ways many people (men and women alike) perceive sexual assault. No matter what someone says they fantasize about as a result of little to no knowledge of what it really means, or what it is really like to be overpowered and raped, or as a result of their trying to work out their previous pain or curiosities; no one deserves to be overpowered or humiliated—with their choices taken away. Ever.

**MYTH:** Women who dress provocatively deserve to be sexually assaulted. **FACT:** The words "dress provocatively" can be replaced with any number of different words, like "are intoxicated," "flirt with men," or "hitchhike." The truth is that no one deserves to be raped, no matter what they were doing. It is not up to someone to avoid being raped. It is the obligation of rapists to decide not to rape.

## How to Host a Screening of Surviving R.Kelly

### **Choose a Safe and Sacred Space Location**

Choose a centralized location where community can gather, feel safe, comfortable and secure. Ensure you have all of the audio/visual equipment you will need for screening.

### Send out closed invitations

Be sure to send out your invitations intentionally. Eliminate any possibility of infiltration to your event by making sure the invites are privately and secure released to your guests and invitees.

### **Create a Host Team**

As you prepare for this screening, you will want to make sure you have a team that can hold the space and care for all guests accordingly. You will want to be sure there is a childcare team, team of healers and counselors, a nurturing team to prepare the space and any food or catering, and a facilitator for debriefing and processing after the screening is complete.

### **Facilitation**

Make sure that there is someone available to pioneer the conversation and to facilitate dialogue, anticipate questions and also processing points for your guests.

## HOW TO SUPPORT A SURVIVOR WHO MIGHT BE WATCHING THE SERIES

Prepare and create space for survivors so they feel safe. Make sure everyone knows what to expect before and when they arrive at the space. It is important to validate survivor's feelings and experiences whenever they disclose.

Disclosing: The first moments after a survivor discloses are critical. Some responses you may give are:

\*\*\*\*I Believe You (it is okay to repeat)

\*\*\*\*Affirm! Affirm! Affirm!

\*\*\*\*I am so sorry this happened to you

\*\*\*\*No one deserves violence against them

\*\*\*\*You have a right to be safe anywhere no matter what, where, or with who.

\*\*\*\*You have a right to justice, you have a right to healing, you have a right to be heard.

Choosing Your Words: Language can be triggering and leading. The words we use have a great deal of influence. Choosing the right words and terms is crucial:

- 1. Survivor vs. Victim
- 2. Sexual Assault vs.Rape
- 3. Technical/clinical words vs. Consent-related words
- 4. Neutral words vs. potentially judgmental/accusatory words
- 5. Agency vs. Dependence (careful balance of what would you like to do now? vs. would you like me to offer you some options?)
- 6. Preventing vs. Accidentally promoting victim blaming

Avoid Victim Blaming: If the survivor expresses shame at inaction, shame that (s)he "let" it happen, some useful phrases to share with them are:

"You are not to blame for this. You took the steps you needed to take to protect yourself. You're here now. It's amazing that you chose to come here (call here, call me); what an incredible, strong decision to take care of yourself. You should be really proud of yourself for that.

Listening to Survivor Stories: If the survivor discusses details of the assault and describes what happened, some useful phrases to share with them are... "I am so sorry this happened to you. That sounds really scary/that must have been

really scary."

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## HOW TO SPEAK TO A SURVIVOR WHO MIGHT BE WATCHING THE SERIES

If survivor wants to go over all of the details of the assault, sit silently and let the survivor talk.

If survivor wants to keep things light hearted for a bit, or laugh through the story, or even take a break to talk about something unrelated, that is okay.

### Survivor to Survivor: If the survivor asks you personal questions...

It is not necessary to withhold. Answer as you feel comfortable, and then turn the conversation back to survivor: "I want to focus on your experience and be here for you."; Keep your opinions to yourself, unless asked; Keep your analysis to yourself, unless survivor initiates.

Please remember disclosure is not about you, it is about being supportive and listening to the survivor.

**Confidentiality:** Never repeat what the survivor tells you in confidence unless they are under the age of 18 at the time of disclosure

If the abuser is someone you know, speak to the survivor about how they would liked you to react

### Making a Plan

The survivor should leave your meeting or conversation with some kind of a plan - physical, emotional, spiritual etc.

Make a list together of ways in which survivor can feel safe. This can include: names of hospitals, counseling centers, shelters or safe dwelling, organizations, sister circles, organizing circles, food pantries, and health clinics, etc.

### **Involving Law Enforcement**

That the survivor's right to report to various sources. If the survivor asks about police or precincts or legal services, it is not your role to deter them as this is their choice. You may ask: Would you like to receive some information about what your rights are when reporting to police or seeking legal assistance? Be non-judgmental.

# BELIEVING SURVIVORS WHEN THE HARM-DOER IS PART OF THE SAME COMMUNITY

- We have to put survivors first. That is what we as an organization and Black feminist activists have been calling for since the founding of Black Women's Blueprint: Believe survivors. Believe Black women.
- We have called for community to do this in voice and in actions with the cases of Bill Cosby, R. Kelly, with Harvey Weinstein and the more than hundred men accused of either rape, sexual assault or sexual abuse, sexual harassment in Hollywood.
- With Bill Cosby, R. Kelly and other Black men accused of sexual violence, the community has been reticent and the backlash against Black antiviolence advocates has been devastating. "Racism" is why Bill Cosby is under scrutiny, is what our critics say.
- There is no recognition that rape and sexual abuse are rampant in all communities, including Black communities. There is a lack of attention to survivors. In addition to race, gender and sexuality are also facets of our identities.
- "Survivorship" and "victimhood" are facets of identities for those who
  choose to claim them, in a country with a history of not acknowledging
  that Black girls and women are rapeable.
- These individuals do not benefit from blind sympathy and virulent efforts by friends, family members, or colleagues who wish to protect the tarnished images of their beloved heroes or loved ones even when they practice sexual violence.
- Refusing to hold those accountable of violating someone else's bodily autonomy not only does a vast disservice to the victim, but additionally perpetuates an insidious system of rape culture that impacts entire communities.
- Any statements accusing Black women of perpetuating and aiding racism and racist America is false and disdainful to survivors, dismissive of their humanity and their basic right to truth, justice and healing. The time is now.

# Black Women's Blueprint Healing and Counseling Program

Caring, Compassionate, Healing, Counseling, Support Groups and Sister Circles:

Contact us for Sexual Assault Crisis Intervention: 646-647-5414/5

For BWB Healing and counseling services and additional information please contact BWB at any of the following:

General office number 347.533.9102/3 hours are from 10am-6pm

BWB Counseling Hotline Call or text 646.647.5414/5 available 24/7

Counseling and Healing Services can be accessed on our website: blackwomensblueprint.org/ending-sexual-violence

Email us 24/7 at: counseling@blueprintny.org

For general information
Email: info@blueprintny.org OR
blackwomen@blueprintny.org
For media media@blueprintny.org
Blackwomensblueprint.org



# Black Women's Blueprint Healing and Counseling Crisis Program

Contact us for Sexual Assault Crisis Intervention: 646-647-5414/5

We serve youth and adults and their families, who have experienced one or more of the following: Childhood Sexual Abuse or Physical Abuse, Rape or Sexual Assault, Human Trafficking, Physical Assault.

The next step is to call or email us for an appointment. Counseling Center: 347-533-9102 or 347-533-9103. Our Healing and Counseling Program Coordinator will guide you on the phone through the steps to an appointment with a trauma healing expert. Our staff will help you assess your current needs, create a workable timetable and plan for your emotional recovery and healing, and find other services if and when necessary.

### Black Women's Blueprint Institute for Gender and Cultural Competency

## Centering Prevention and Intervention through training and technical assistance

Our Trainings are steeped in transnational liberatory models, our Institute for Gender and Cultural Competence brings culturally-specific, structurally competent, in-depth intersectional analysis and expertise that will stir your activist mind and inform your ability to practice.

With Prevention we recognized that few resources exist that are culturally relevant and focus on preventing rape and sexual assault before it occurs, we developed innovative programs focused on identifying and preventing sexual violence before it occurs.

Our Intervention methods specializes in liberatory bystander intervention models, transformative and healing models as well as asset-based community accountability models.

Visit www.bwbtraining.org

Book a Training Today!

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