

# The Advocate

The Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center Newsletter

## Let's talk about Rape Jokes

### Lanna Allen

Outreach Advocate

Unfortunately, rape jokes are no longer confined to seedy neon-lit comedy clubs. They're no longer exclusive to frat houses, military barracks, or high school locker rooms. No construction zone, subway, or staff meeting is safe from purveyors of this celebration of misogyny. This is rape culture. As a former firefighter, I experienced the profound displeasure of navigating rape jokes on a daily basis. It was ingrained into the fire service culture long before I arrived; it had made an undeniable influence on firefighting lingo; enough to severely lower the bar for respectful communication at the fire house. Why has this and other forms of disparagement humor become so pervasive? What is the impact to our communities when we respond with anything short of outrage? One thing is clear, when we tolerate, minimize, or ignore jokes about rape, we contribute to rape culture and cease to be a civilized people.



Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center

*"The way they do comedy is like schoolyard bullies who find each person's vulnerability and make fun of it. Their audience consists of other bullies who co-sign their abuse, and bystander kids who laugh along to keep from getting targeted. That pretty much describes the situation with many of the male comedians who tell rape jokes."*

- Aya de Leon, Director of the Poetry for the People program at UC Berkley

It's no secret that humor is a powerful bonding agent. It is key to advertising products, healing our bodies, and even wooing a potential mate. In short, humor disarms us. On a neurological level, our brains learn to abandon logic in order to make the mental leap to a ridiculous conclusion or otherwise ill-fitting punch-line.

Rape jokes often serve as a policing agent of traditional masculinity. The joke teller is establishing the male sex as dominant, while casting any display of femininity as basis for victimization. For instance, ask women what it means to be a woman. The responses will vary but most reinforce a theme of freedom, empowerment, and self expression. Ask men what it means to be a man. Get ready for an immediate slew of responses ranging from vulgarities to battle cries. To put it plainly, to be

masculine means being physically tough and emotionally invulnerable. Anyone who hopes to achieve manhood must avoid being perceived as weak or feminine. This messaging has achieved mainstream status and is imparted on males early on in childhood. From there, it is codified and dutifully passed down from father to son, coach to player, and upperclassmen to underclassmen.

Jackson Katz, an antisexist male activist makes the following observation of the portrayal of masculinity in popular media, "There's a whole range of iconic representations of American manhood that regularly show up in popular lists of all-time greatest guy flicks; all of these films, to a number, linking being a man to using violence or the threat of violence to command respect and achieve power." In the world of multiplayer gaming, similar masculinity themes take over the space to either keep women out or disempower them with vile language and threats of harm. Another space where the degradation of women seems fair game, is comedy clubs.

In June of 2012, popular Comedy Central host Daniel Tosh used his set at the Laugh Factory to argue that anything can be funny, even rape. When a female in the audience, dared to speak out in disagreement, Tosh tapped into the violent socialization of his peers to turn the attention back on her. His response, "Wouldn't it be funny if that girl got raped by, like, five guys right now? Like right now?," he taunted. This exchange created public outcry, in defense of the female who spoke up. However, many male comedians sided with Tosh who claimed they were victims of censorship. Although no one has the ability to censor Daniel Tosh or any comedian, anyone who is witness to

a rape joke equally has the right to pronounce that joke unfunny, without fear of retaliation or obscene threats of violence.

If that audience member's friend had not shared the exchange on tumbler, we may have never known about it. The most alarming part of the incident is what didn't happen. No one echoed the sentiment that rape jokes were not funny. No one in the audience rose to the female's defense when Tosh turned on her. Despite the audience being implicated in Tosh's imagery, of her being gang raped and stripped of her sexual agency, the response was to follow the decorum of rape culture. Meaning instead of speaking out the audience response was, "Hey, don't look at me!" "I didn't say it." "It was a joke."

The acceptability of rape jokes and other discriminatory humor is a man-made social norm. Together we can unmake it. Any form of gender-

## WASAC Calendar of Events

**May 18: 6:00-8:00 p.m.**  
**Protective Parenting Program**  
**(court approved)**

**May 31: 12:00-1:00 p.m.**  
**WASAC Lunch and Learn**  
**Sexual Violence in**  
**Latino population**

**FREE & CONFIDENTIAL**  
**316-263-0185**

based violence can be very hurtful to women and gender non-conforming individuals. Likewise, it can also be a threat to “manly” males who will meet the same fate if they stray from the conventional. We must speak up, walk away, withdraw support, and demand change when we encounter this form of hate. Rape jokes or insults can greatly influence the culture of any environment. I challenge everyone to be an agent of change to end rape culture, including eliminating rape jokes.



## May Lunch and Learn

### Sexual Violence in the Latino Population

Bring your lunch and join us as we talk about the dynamics of sexual violence in the Latino community. The goal of this session will be how to effectively communicate and assist Latino survivors of sexual assault. Participants will also learn about Latino culture and family dynamics, immigration services and remedies that may be available to survivors of sexual and domestic violence.

Hosted by: Wendy Mejia, Latino Outreach Coordinator

Location: 355 N Waco, Suite 100, 67202

Date/Time: May 31st from 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.



**Thank you for your time  
and insight to help WASAC  
continue to grow!**

Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center (WASAC) has launched a new survey in hopes of gaining feedback of the needs in our community. We want to be able to tailor our services to meet the needs of survivors in Sedgwick County. If you have experienced sexual violence, at any point in your life, please consider taking this short survey. It should take less than 5 minutes, we really value your honest feedback. The survey will be active until the end of May. You can access the survey through the following site: [www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2674748/Wichita-Area-Sexual-Assault-Center-Community-Survey](http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2674748/Wichita-Area-Sexual-Assault-Center-Community-Survey)

Easy access is also available on our website [www.wichitasac.com](http://www.wichitasac.com), click on the survivor survey banner at the top of the page.

# Gain Experience and Skills While Helping Survivors of Sexual Violence



## Become a Volunteer Advocate!

We need volunteers! Our volunteers are extremely important and help us provide critical services to survivors of sexual violence. Our volunteer advocates take shifts on the 24-hour crisis hotline and are available to accompany survivors to hospital exams and police interviews providing emotional support and advocacy. Our new advocate training provides intensive education on the psychological, medical and legal implications of sexual assault, as well as other forms of oppression and how they interconnect in the lives of survivors. Crisis intervention and counseling skills are developed through a series of presentations, discussion, and role playing. During this 40-hour training, WASAC and community partners team up to provide a detailed synopsis of the demand for sexual assault advocacy in Sedgwick County.

After completing the application and screening process, our volunteers are required to attend 1 orientation, the 40-hour training session and complete 2 buddy shifts.

**Volunteers are asked to commit for a minimum of 1 year and sign up for 2 shifts each month.  
\*\*Volunteers must be 21 years of age.**

### Upcoming 40-Hour Training Schedule:

**When:** May 11th-June 2nd, 2016

Evening and Weekend Sessions

**Where:** 355 N. Waco, Suite 100

For more information, contact Amy at 263-0185 or [amy@wichitasac.com](mailto:amy@wichitasac.com)  
You can also find our volunteer application online at <http://wichitasac.com/volunteer/>



Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center



# Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center

**2016**



**Free and open to all! No RSVP required.**

Bring your lunch and join us from 12-1 p.m. on the last Tuesday of each month to learn more about the reality of sexual violence in our community.

<b>January 26</b>	<b>Supporting Disclosures</b>
<b>February 23</b>	<b>Rape in Detention: It's not the penalty</b>
<b>March 29</b>	<b>Sexual Violence against Men and Boys</b>
<b>April 26</b>	<b>What is Rape Culture?</b>
<b>May 31</b>	<b>Sexual Violence in the Latino Population</b>
<b>June 28</b>	<b>LGB-What?:</b> The underrepresented letters within a marginalized acronym
<b>July 26</b>	<b>Trauma-Informed Services</b>
<b>August 30</b>	<b>Sexual Violence against People with Disabilities</b>
<b>September 27</b>	<b>Risk and Benefits of Protection Orders</b>
<b>October 25</b>	<b>Sexual and Domestic Violence: Connections</b>
<b>November 29</b>	<b>Navigating the Criminal Justice System</b>
<b>December 27</b>	<b>Practicing Self Care While Caring for Others</b>

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All WASAC Lunch & Learn sessions are held at our office at 355 N Waco, Suite 100. For more information, call (316) 263-0185 or visit us online at [www.wichitasac.com](http://www.wichitasac.com).



# Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center

## Teen girls (age 13-17)

- Support group  
Monday, 5:30 - 6:30 pm
- Trauma-sensitive yoga  
Monday, 6:30 - 7:30 pm

## Parents and caregivers

- Support group  
Monday, 6:45 - 7:30 pm

## Adult women (age 18+)

- Support group  
Tuesday, 5:30 - 6:30 pm
- Trauma-sensitive yoga  
Tuesday, 6:30 - 7:30 pm

WASAC also offers short-term individual therapy for men, women, and children.

To schedule an appointment, please call our office between 8:30 am and 5:00 pm.

WASAC support groups are confidential, free, and open to survivors at any point in their healing. All groups meet weekly and are open-ended, with no appointment necessary to participate. At this time, child care is not available.

WASAC office

355 N Waco,  
Suite 100

SW corner of 3rd/Waco

316-263-0185