

SAPHE's Letter to the Tulane Community

Content Warning: References to Sexual Violence and Assault

First and Foremost, A Specific Message to Survivors:

SAPHE recognizes that the events of last semester regarding sexual violence were painful, disturbing, and stressful to say the least. The conversations around campus recently have the potential to be retraumatizing and harmful. Our community has been speaking out about perpetrators and how to hold them accountable, but while activism is necessary, it is critical to remember that activism and advocacy are not the same; as we're having these conversations, survivors should always come first.

To the survivor reading this message: *you are valued, we believe you, and you are not alone.* We want to acknowledge that while these conversations are important, they are not always healing for survivors. It is okay to take a step back and not participate. If and how you choose to engage in these conversations is entirely up to you. You do not need to share your story, engage with resources, or report unless YOU want to. You are allowed to focus on yourself and your own healing journey and do it all on your own terms, and SAPHE is here to support you along the way. No matter how or if you choose to disclose any experiences, we are here for you. Our confidential 24/7 hotline is available at (504) 654-9543. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you need our services in any way; our mission always has been and always will be to support you.

We also want to recognize the Black Anti-Sexual Violence collective No More Tears and their work to center and support Black survivors and their experiences. The movement against sexual violence on campus has been centered on white, cisgendered, heterosexual women. This movement was started by black femmes and LGBTQ+ individuals, communities that are now often left out of these conversations. Sexual violence can and does happen to anyone of any identity, regardless of gender, race, sexuality, citizenship status, and more.

When thinking about and discussing sexual violence, an intersectional framework must always be used. SAPHE defines intersectionality as an analytical framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege. We must adopt an intersectional and anti-oppressive framework to support survivors of all identities. Every person's race, gender, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, citizenship status, physical ability, etc. come together to impact the survivor experience. Sexual violence is not just a Greek life issue, a cisgender women's issue, a heterosexual issue, a white person's issue, or alcohol or drug-related issue. At the end of the day, sexual violence impacts everyone, including those marginalized within this sexist, white supremacist, and exclusionary society. To the survivors who do not see themselves being represented in the discussion of who a survivor is: **we see you. Your experience is real and valid. You deserve to claim your healing. You matter.**

Who is SAPHE; What have we been doing; How we work

If you are not already aware, SAPHE is a group of Tulane students who are dedicated to supporting survivors of sexual violence and addressing rape culture at Tulane. The purpose of SAPHE is to provide resources and support to the Tulane community through a peer-run 24/7 hotline, while also working to dismantle rape culture on campus through workshops, events, first-year orientation, and outreach. SAPHE members are trained in inclusive, trauma-informed care and empathetic listening and are equipped to provide support and resources to any person in the Tulane community.

Tulane students can call the SAPHE hotline when they would like to unpack experiences with sexual violence and to seek out resources to further address their needs. Callers can be anyone affected by sexual violence: survivors themselves, friends or family of survivors, witnesses to sexual violence, etc. **No call is too small.** We are only a survivor-centered resource and don't serve as a hotline for perpetrators or accused perpetrators. SAPHE members are trained to provide support and resources to any person who might need them. Additionally, SAPHE is a HIPAA-certified, confidential resource and your advocate will not share any of your personal information unless it's in extreme and rare circumstances (i.e. a health or safety emergency).

SAPHE's first priority is to be student advocates within campus. Our time, energy, and resources are spent doing what we can to best prevent further violence and support survivors. **We are disheartened that the resources we have shared have not always been adequate and survivor-centered. SAPHE continuously reviews the resources that we share and we will be looking into additional resources that are more survivor-centered in order to better serve our community.** We are always looking to hold ourselves accountable as an organization. Please do not hesitate to fill out [this feedback form](#) for any comments or suggestions on how SAPHE can improve our services for survivors and peers.

How to Support Survivors of SA:

There is no "right thing to say" when a survivor discloses their experience to you. However, continued education and practicing empathetic listening can provide support to your peers and help the ones you love feel heard and validated.

Let's break it down step by step for how to support a friend:

- I. First: Listen and hold your questions. It is not your job to investigate, uncover all the facts, or ask for more information than they want to share. Let your friend lead the conversation and focus on being a good listener.
- II. Second: believe your friend and let them know that you are glad they shared with you. You cannot help your friend if you do not believe that they have been hurt. So, start by believing.
- III. Third, reassure your friend that this is not their fault. Saying things like "this is not your fault" or "you didn't deserve this," can help to validate your friend's experience and know you are safe to share with. Self-blame and self-doubt are common reactions of victims

of sexual violence but it is NEVER someone's fault- no one ever deserves to be sexually assaulted.

- IV. Lastly, offer resources--*if they are asked for*--but do not force them! Your friend is going to need support and there are a lot of resources on and off-campus that can provide that. Below, we will give you a slide with some of the main ones at Tulane and off-campus ones.

How Should You Talk about SA?

As advocates, it has been encouraging to see an increase in awareness and commitment to ending sexual violence. We would like to offer some suggestions for how to structure these conversations because they can often be emotionally difficult and overwhelming.

- **Take note of your physical environment when discussing sexual assault.** You never know when a survivor could be listening to your conversation. Be cautious of the terms you use and the level of your voice when having these discussions in a public setting to ensure that you do not accidentally retraumatize a survivor.
- **It is important to recognize the power dynamics that structure sexual assault while also ensuring that you are not alienating any survivors.** Although there is a common myth that survivors of sexual violence are female and perpetrators of sexual violence are male, perpetrators and survivors of sexual violence can have any gender identity, whether that be nonbinary, male, female or any other gender.
- **Don't be afraid to call someone in if you hear them perpetuating a rape myth.** Education is the first step to sexual assault prevention. Calling someone in entails teaching them why what they said is wrong without "canceling" them. It is the preferred method of education rather than "calling someone out", which just socially isolates that person without successfully educating them. The goal is not to win an argument, but to work towards a change in behavior and a reduction in future harm.
- **Take a survivor-centered approach.** Before any conversation about sexual assault, consider how that conversation could positively or negatively affect a survivor. Show respect with your tone and use of language, avoid making assumptions, and prioritize the expressed feelings or needs of survivors.

One of the most important things to remember is that *not all experiences are the same*. Many aspects of the survivor experience, from access to resources to the ability to be heard or believed, are deeply affected by the different identities an individual may hold. Even if two survivor stories sound similar, that does not necessarily mean that each survivor experienced them the same way, and every single mechanism that a survivor uses to process their emotions and their experience is equally valid.

Some survivors want perpetrators to be held accountable through reporting, and some survivors don't. Here are just a few reasons survivors may decide not to report:

- The [Title IX process](#) can be taxing emotionally and could potentially retraumatize survivors.

- Individuals with marginalized identities (e.g. LGBTQ+, BIPOC communities) and those that fit outside the common narrative (e.g. men) often have a much different experience with legal/judicial systems from others, and are much less likely to achieve the results that they may be seeking
- Survivors may not want their friends and family to find out about their assault. LGBTQ+ survivors may not be “out.”
- Survivors may know the perpetrator personally and not want to complicate their own relationships with other individuals in their lives.

Assuming that all survivors will want to go through a reporting process, perpetuates victim-blaming and dismisses the different challenges that people may face when engaging in a process. It is completely valid and understandable for a survivor to decide that they do not want to report, and survivors do not owe it to anyone to report (or do anything else!)

It is important that as allies to survivors of sexual violence we have the right tools to avoid victim-blaming in conversations about sexual violence. Centering discussions on sexual violence is essential to ensuring survivors feel heard and validated in their experience.

The following are some suggestions on how to avoid victim-blaming:

- Do not insert your opinion/beliefs about what the survivor is doing/what they should be doing.
- Do not state how the survivor could have “prevented” their experience of sexual violence (i.e. if they didn’t dress “provocatively,” or if they weren’t so “flirtatious,” or if they didn’t “drink so much,” then they would not have been sexually assaulted). People cannot make themselves invulnerable to sexual violence and it is not anyone’s responsibility to prevent someone else from choosing to sexually assault them.
- Do not assume that victims/survivors could have avoided being sexually assaulted if they were on a date/dating the perpetrators, or if they consented to some sexual activities but not others. Intimate partners are commonly the perpetrators of sexual violence and past sexual activity should never be assumed as consent to future sexual activity.
- Avoid defending perpetrators and inadvertently projecting blame onto survivors
 - Examples:
 - Defending a perpetrator who you know well and assuming that they have good character and wouldn’t perpetrate sexual violence
 - Saying that the victim/survivor “must be exaggerating,” so they “must not have actually been sexually assaulted”
 - Saying that the victim/survivor must be doing this for attention because the perpetrator is popular/well known
 - Saying that the victim/survivor “must feel insecure and want to gain attention and popularity” by reporting

What can YOU do?

There is a palpable sense of frustration on campus as we all struggle to find a way to move forward. It is extremely difficult to resist the desire to act when faced with high statistics of sexual violence and insufficient support for survivors. That being said, it is essential to fight that sense of urgency, which is a tenant of white supremacy, and give this issue the time and thought it deserves. Before acting, pause and consider what the best thing to do for survivors is. Below are some survivor-centered things you can do to get involved with sexual assault prevention:

- Participate in continuous self-education. Education is crucial for sexual assault prevention. As SAPHEs, we participate in continuous education to ensure that we are informed, and we encourage y'all to do the same!
 - Online Modules
 - <https://evawintl.org/olti/>
 - Address from Tarana Burke, Founder of the #MeToo Movement
 - <https://youtu.be/50wz6Xm9VYs>
 - Futures without Violence: ANTI-RACISM AS VIOLENCE PREVENTION
 - <https://youtu.be/p0-hgvf3XSA>
 - Roots and Resistance
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86sW-SK7yrk&ab_channel=LearningNetworkLearningNetwork
 - Navigating the New Title IX Highway at Tulane
 - <https://youtu.be/DGOuPqzQrVI>
 - Making a Title IX Disclosure at Tulane
 - <https://youtu.be/rFvZyWSw6sg>
 - All In Tulane
 - <https://allin.tulane.edu/>
 - Tulane Library Guide on Sexual Violence Prevention
 - <https://libguides.tulane.edu/svresource/html>
- Get involved with a local organization in New Orleans that provides support to survivors.
 - LaFASA is a Louisiana-based organization that provides prevention efforts and survivor support. You can find ways to get involved here: <http://lafasa.org/main/volunteer>
 - The New Orleans Family Justice Center provides crisis services, legal support, advocacy support, forensic exams, and more to survivors of sexual and domestic violence. You can find ways to get involved here: <https://nofjc.org/volunteer-1>
 - Sexual Trauma Response and Awareness (STAR) provides advocacy, counseling, and legal services to survivors. You can find ways to get involved here: <https://star.ngo/work-with-us/>
- Join the All In Student Coalition- a coalition of Tulane students that meet monthly to plan sexual violence prevention initiatives for the Tulane campus community. Email Jennifer Hunt at jhunt4@tulane.edu for more details on how to attend.
- Take the [Climate Survey](#) when it comes out in January.

Resources

Below are resources that may be helpful for survivors. As we have learned and have established, resources do not always work. If you reach out to any of these resources and it does not feel effective, we highly encourage you to not settle for a resource that results in you feeling uncomfortable or worse. You can walk away, request a different care provider, or try another resource. As we said before: you are allowed to focus on yourself and your own healing journey and **do it all on your own terms**. If you would like more in-depth resource recommendations, have any questions regarding these resources, or just want support, call the SAPHE hotline: 504-654-9543.

- Confidentiality & Privacy of on-campus resources
 - Private (information that these resources need to share will be shared)
 - Case Management and Victim Support Services (CMVSS)
 - Main Office: LBC Suite G02
 - 504-314-2160
 - Student Affairs Professional On Call
 - 24/7: 504-920-9900
 - Tulane University Police Department (TUPD)
 - 24/7 Emergency: 504-865-5911
 - 24/7 Non-Emergency: 504-865-5381
 - www.tulane.edu/police
 - Office of Student Conduct
 - LBC Suite G02
 - 504-865-5516
 - Reporting
 - www.tulane.edu/concerns
 - Website
 - www.conduct.tulane.edu
 - Office of Institutional Equity
 - 1555 Poydras St., Suite 964
 - 504-865-4748 OR 504-862-8083
 - www.hr.tulane.edu
 - Title IX Office
 - Jones Hall 308
 - Julia Broussard: 504-314-2897
 - www.allin.tulane.edu
 - Confidential (will not share any information except in the case of emergencies)
 - Sexual Aggression Peer Hotline and Education (SAPHE)
 - 24/7: 504-654-9543
 - The Line
 - 24/7: 504-264-6074
 - The Counseling Center
 - 1st floor of Science and Engineering Lab Complex = the Diboll Complex (across from Reily Center)

- 504-314-2277
- The Student Health Center
 - Corner of Willow St. and Newcomb Pl, Building 92
 - Nurse Advice Line: 504-862-8121
- Big Easy EC (Emergency Contraception)
 - (504)-215-863