



The National Partnership Against Interpersonal Violence Across the Lifespan (NPEIV) condemns degrading language and behaviors concerning sexual assault.

Words matter. Actions matter. Attitudes matter. Recent comments spoken by persons of influence and leadership endorsing sexually assaultive attitudes and actions have made news headlines and highlighted an important issue related to the culture of sexual violence and abuse in our society, and the role language and words play in supporting and condoning all forms of interpersonal violence. Words endorsing violence against women, minorities, immigrants, or the LGBT community matter. All behaviors that involve any form of unwanted and nonconsensual sexual contact are forms of sexual assault. Any assertion that such contact is acceptable is counter to our country’s values and should be counter to values worldwide. Such words and actions support a culture of violence and abuse, and send the wrong message to our children, both girls and boys. They send the wrong message about who we are as a people, and our moral values. This is especially damaging when those words are spoken or acted out, and then when those actions are condoned by persons of influence or in leadership roles. When such individuals use abusive, racist or oppressive language, they endorse, support and perpetuate violence in all its forms, and such actions dehumanize people.

Attempting to dismiss those words as “locker-room talk,” or such behaviors as “boys being boys,” unfairly and dishonestly impugns all men and denigrates all women. As a response to this generalization, many men, including male athletes, as well as the White House, have stood up to make it clear that comments endorsing sexual maltreatment of women have no place in the locker-room, a beauty pageant, at parties, and certainly not in the Oval Office.

Instead of perpetrating rape culture, racism, oppression, and violence, our leaders and all people of influence should be serving as role models for respectful and healthy behavior. Our leaders and all people of influence should be challenging such behaviors – in their language and in their actions. Instead of promoting oppression, dehumanization, and degrading of people, our leaders and people in influential positions in our communities should be seeking to support policies and actions that prevent all forms of interpersonal violence. Those in positions of leadership need to set positive, respectful, and healthy examples in their attitudes, beliefs, comments, and behaviors that are respectful of race, gender, and all cultures.

The National Partnership to End Interpersonal Violence Across the Lifespan (NPEIV) condemns all sexist, xenophobic, homophobic, and racist rhetoric. We express our concern that such unacceptable language and behaviors perpetuate and exacerbate interpersonal violence and abuse. All people must be treated with respect and dignity in a civilized society.

NPEIV is an overarching group of individuals, organizations, agencies, coalitions, and groups that embrace a national, multi-disciplinary and multicultural commitment to violence prevention across the lifespan.

For more information, visit www.npeiv.org
Robert Geffner, Ph.D., President NPEIV on behalf of the Board of Directors
bgeffner@alliant.edu

