



## STANDING TOGETHER TO END SEXUAL ASSAULT

### STESA supports Dr. Christine Blasey Ford

Dear supporters of Standing Together to End Sexual Assault (STESA),

Today, members of our community stood with Dr. Christine Blasey Ford. Dr. Ford showed great courage and did an incredible job of describing her experience during the Senate Hearings. We are disheartened by the events in Washington, DC which have breached Dr. Ford's request for confidentiality. We must respect survivors' rights to determine the circumstances under which their stories will be shared and assert the dignity of all survivors of sexual assault.

Our participation in today's rally at De La Guerra Plaza affirmed the choice of our new name. Idalia Gomez, our Program Director gave a moving and action oriented speech, "... To view the high incidence of sexual assault in our country as a series of isolated incidents is to ignore the larger problem of norms in our society... How can we create a community free of sexual violence if our Judicial System fosters perpetrators to enforce the justice that is supposed to deter that violence?"

Our Community Education Coordinator, Christian Sierra and I fielded questions from the media. Many of Dr. Ford's critics question the truthfulness of her story. Some questions concern delays in disclosures, profiles of perpetrators and holding perpetrators accountable.

In our experience in working with survivors of sexual assault, delayed disclosures are very common. Most of the calls we receive on our 24-hour hotline come from survivors whose sexual assault experiences occurred years or decades in the past. Their reasons for delay in disclosure are varied. Many survivors, rightly so, feel that they will not be believed or that their experience will be minimized. Survivors fear they may face retaliation and loss of privacy in their personal or professional lives. Many face threats and harassment after the fact. In her testimony today, Dr. Ford named many of these and other elements.

What we see in our work is that perpetrators come from all walks of life. However, regardless of their position in the community, their power, their fame, or their wealth, perpetrators must be held accountable. Defending those who commit acts of sexual violence keeps survivors in silence and is an impediment to their healing process.

We each have a role to play in preventing and ending sexual assault. Small and large acts will bring an end to sexual assault! As a community we must not reward those who have committed these crimes with more fame, power or wealth. We must not entrust them with the systems that we hold dear. **We must stand together to say that we will not tolerate sexual violence from anyone!** People in our community have various responses and some have already called the hotline to seek support as they have been restimulated by the hearings. We want to engage our community in conversations about these issues.

Please join us as we Stand Together to End Sexual Assault!

Sincerely,

Elsa Granados, Executive Director

### Hotline (805) 564-3696

If you and/or a significant other are in need of support, please contact our 24-Hour Hotline. All services are confidential and available in English and Spanish.



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