



## **A Message from OVW Director Susan B. Carbon**

Dear Friends,

Today, March 8, we join the global community in honoring both Women's History Month and the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of International Women's Day. It is a fitting opportunity to reflect critically on how far we have come for equality, and the great strides we have made in ending violence against women internationally.

In the United States, these two historic March celebrations provide a time to remember women's suffrage advocates like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott and Susan B. Anthony, who believed women had a voice, one that was important to be heard, before their male and female peers. It is a time to celebrate Elizabeth Blackwell and Rebecca Lee Crumpler who paved the way for equality for women in the medical field, regardless of both gender and race. It is a time to commemorate Arabella Mansfield and Ada H. Kepley and Sandra Day O'Connor, who broke the glass doors of the court house to allow women to enter the field of law. It is a time to honor Margaret Chase Smith and Susanna Medora Salter and Nancy Pelosi, who gave women not just a voice at the ballot box, but in the decisions of city halls and the United States Congress as elected officials. As President Obama stated in his Presidential Proclamation of Women's History Month and International Women's Day:

During Women's History Month, we reflect on the extraordinary accomplishments of women and honor their role in shaping the course of our Nation's history. Today, women have reached

heights their mothers and grandmothers might only have imagined... In honor of the pioneering women who came before us, and in recognition of those who will come after us, this month, we recommit to erasing the remaining inequities facing women in our day.

We would be remised to celebrate only women advocates and omit others who have pursued in the quest for equality and to end violence against women. We honor the achievements of men like Vice President Joe Biden, who in 1994 had the commitment and conscience to take on this international atrocity by penning the Violence Against Women Act. We honor organizations across the country that are addressing issues of bystander, specifically male bystander, intervention and the importance of every member of a community being an advocate to stop sexual and domestic violence against women when they see it, and acknowledge its presence even when they don't see it. We celebrate President Obama's call to all agency leaders, men and women alike, to address these issues. As he stated in his Presidential Proclamation:

I have also called on every agency in the Federal Government to be part of the solution to ending violence against women, and they have responded with unprecedented cooperation to protect victims of domestic and sexual violence and enable survivors to break the cycle of abuse.

But we also take this time to look to how far we have to go to create a world where women are empowered in all ways to end violence against women for future generations. Still today, in the United States, violence against women is a national epidemic. The Centers for Disease Control report that there are 1200 deaths and two million injuries to women from intimate partner violence each year. Nearly one in four women reports experiencing violence by a current or former spouse or boyfriend at some time in her life. These numbers increase when addressing the Indian Nations

within the United States. Furthermore, during a 12 month period, an estimated 3.4 million persons age 18 or older will be victims of stalking. This year alone, nearly 5% of college women will be sexually assaulted in their campus community. Researchers estimate that about 18% of women in the United States report having been raped at some point in their lifetimes.

Internationally, the atrocities of violence against women are far from solved. Across the world, at least one in three women and girls is domestically abused or sexually assaulted in her lifetime. Approximately four million women and girls are trafficked for prostitution annually. Reports of refugee women being raped as they search for firewood, or soldiers sexually abusing young girls in exchange for food, are rampant. Honor killings, bride burnings, dowry deaths, female genital mutilation and human trafficking are all too common. We have a great deal of work to do to end this violence, at home and abroad. As President Obama stated:

This year, we commemorate the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day... This day reminds us that, while enormous progress has been made, there is still work to be done before women achieve true parity.

At the Office on Violence Against Women, we take every opportunity possible to engage the field, and our federal partners and colleagues, to end this violence. This past month we honored Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month with a specific event addressing the role of men in ending sexual violence and inequality for women. Specifically, the event explored the landscape of dating relationships among youth and the experience of teen dating abuse victims to better understand how messages of masculinity shape young men's view and treatment of women. We also focused on effective strategies for advocating for youth victims. The objective was to help educate Department of Justice employees who are parents, siblings, and friends of teens to better

understand the emerging issues in youth relationships and the local resources available for parents and youth.

Next month, we will take part in nationwide Sexual Assault Awareness Month activities, highlighting the importance of addressing these often un-discussed crimes. We encourage you to check our website later this month for a list of Sexual Assault Awareness Month activities, as well as ways you can get involved in Sexual Assault Awareness Month in your community.

This month, for Women's History Month and International Women's Day on March 8<sup>th</sup>, we hope you will join us in looking back at the many accomplishments and successes of the women's movement and the work to end violence against women. We also hope this month will encourage you to renew your commitment to these efforts, looking forward to a time when violence against women is a part of our history, not our present or future.

With deep respect and gratitude,  
Susan B. Carbon  
OVW Director

U.S. Department of Justice

We remind all those in need of assistance, or other concerned friends and individuals, to call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE or the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE.