

Promoting equality for LGBTQ communities is central to sexual violence prevention

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) applauds President Barack Obama's endorsement of same-sex marriage. The president's statement sets the tone that everyone should support equal rights. Equality and respect are at the core of sexual violence prevention.

The NSVRC believes that sexual violence in our society will never end as long as certain groups are denied equal rights. Too often, our social systems are not informed by, or responsive to, the needs of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ). This can make reporting and accessing services difficult at best and re-victimizing at worst. Sometimes people who identify as LGBTQ don't report because they fear that local authorities won't treat the crime fairly; sometimes it's because victims do not want to report members of their own community. And sometimes victims remain silent because they don't want to deal with society's anti-gay sentiments.

However, when the President of the United States affirms the rights of people who identify as gay and lesbian to live their lives with their partners with the full support of society, then discrimination and oppression begin to fade away. Respectful, loving, consensual, healthy, and supported relationships are the antitheses of sexual violence.

As a nation, we can all work together to prevent sexual violence. By moving to a truly egalitarian society, one that recognizes the dignity and equality of everyone, we ensure that everyone is respected for who they are.