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A COMMUNITY APPROACH TO PREVENTING DATING VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE: VIOLENCE IS EVERYONE'S ISSUE

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In the United States, 25% of women may be sexually assaulted during college, and on of every three female and male college students have experienced dating violence. Despite these high rates of violence, most college students don't behave violently or condone violence. For example, the vast majority of men (75%-94%) do not engage in violence. Why, then, is there so much violence on college campuses? We argue that high rates of violence exist because we tend to conceptualize violence as a "women's issue" and fail to realize that violence is a community issue. Thus, an unfortunate syllogism results: Most students are personally opposed to violence and don't want it happening on their campus; but yet they do not see violence as "their issue". Because violence is not "their issue", they tend to respond passively to a campus culture that tacitly supports violence, as evidenced by violent media images and jokes trivializing violence. Fortunately, there is a growing awareness in the United States that all members of the campus community – women and men, as well as students, faculty, and staff -- can play a significant role in ending dating violence and sexual violence. A number of campuses now have violence prevention interventions that strive to frame violence and its prevention as a community issue. This presentation will describe some of these interventions, including Changing Carolina, an intervention that we are conducting at the University of South Carolina.

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