

“From this day forward, I promise to be part of the solution in ending violence against women.”



Massachusetts White Ribbon Day

A Men's Initiative Project of Jane Doe Inc.

BACKGROUND

Massachusetts White Ribbon Day is connected with an international campaign called The White Ribbon Campaign. The White Ribbon Campaign was created by a handful of Canadian men in 1991 on the second anniversary of one man's massacre of fourteen women in Montreal. They began the White Ribbon Campaign to urge men to speak out against violence against women. Today, the WRC is a worldwide campaign in over 60 countries that has collected well over 5 million signatures and growing.

Since launching the campaign in Massachusetts in 2008, Jane Doe Inc. has recruited over 525 White Ribbon Day Ambassadors and tens of thousands of men and boys have signed the pledge. JDI spearheaded this opportunity for Massachusetts to join this international effort for human rights to engage men to help end violence against women, men and children. The approach is one of celebrating positive masculinity; inviting men and boys to be leaders to help end violence against women; and encouraging men and boys to contribute to a solution in any number of ways.

JDI'S GOALS FOR WHITE RIBBON DAY 2014:

Hosted annually on the first Thursday in March, Massachusetts White Ribbon Day 2014 will be March 6, 2014. Men throughout Massachusetts will once again speak out to help:

- ❖ change societal attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate and make excuses for violence against women!
- ❖ promote safety and respect in all relationships and situations!
- ❖ foster a positive image of masculinity and invite all men and boys to join in a celebration of personal peace and cooperation!
- ❖ build a network of resounding voices that will support and advance JDI initiatives and JDI members!

How?

Men and boys can take the White Ribbon Day pledge, attend a local event sponsored by a White Ribbon Day Affiliate or organize a pledge event on their own. Men and boys are also encouraged to become White Ribbon Day Ambassadors and invite their friends and colleagues to join them. The pledge, ambassador sign up and event materials are available at www.janedoe.org/whiteribbonday. The goals of Massachusetts White Ribbon Day extend beyond the specific date. We welcome participants to carry the spirit of the campaign throughout the year.

Why focus on men's violence against women?

Quite simply, because violence affects us all, yet men have a particular relationship to violence against women and the means to help stop it. This campaign asks us to change – in fact eliminate – the social values among males which support and foster violence against

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women. While not all men are violent, each man has a role and responsibility to play in ending it. And that starts by changing long-accepted and deeply-rooted beliefs of male authority.

This campaign is not about individual acts of violence but rather a broader framework that confronts unhealthy behaviors and promotes positive masculinity. It's about creating and fostering a deep mutual accountability among men to one another and to women, to uphold their commitments as fathers, partners, friends, colleagues, brothers and sons of women and girls, to broaden definitions of masculinity that includes men and boys who support, nurture and foster authentic and respectful relationships.

We have adopted an [international human rights](#) perspective that challenges us to change the ways in which male authority has been equated with power and control over others' individual freedoms and liberties and the world around them. For women, the most notable expression of male authority has been violence against women – from sexual assault and domestic violence to human trafficking and prostitution. As a result, the basic rights that most men enjoy – safety in their homes, ability to go out at night, a job free of harassment – are a source of fear and suffering for women in much of the world.

What role do men have as part of the solution?

Although there have been countless men who have and do work as allies with women, and with violent men in the name of ending violence against women (VAW), much of that work has not been visible to the broader community. While this work has been important, it has not provided the larger community of men and boys with strategies for holding one another accountable for the violence of men and boys against women and girls. Furthermore, that work has been at times separate and apart from women or has failed to focus on the roots of VAW and the social norms and institutionalized sexism and misogyny that undergirds and sustains sexualized violence, reproductive violence and other forms of systematic oppression of women and girls that daily violates the humanity and human rights of females.

This campaign celebrates non-violence as a demonstration of our manhood and holds this value as an example for our children and other men. By taking on this challenge, we invite all men to shape our shared values and set new standards for what we will promote and tolerate.

This campaign gives men a way to send a very public message that they do and must:

- care about these issues;
- take responsibility and learn about solutions to end men's violence against women;
- work to create an environment that promotes respect and equality.

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Does this campaign address male victims and LGBT victims of sexual assault and domestic violence?

Jane Doe Inc. is committed to working on behalf of all sexual assault and domestic violence victims – regardless of gender, gender identity and sexual orientation. We must work together to ensure that services and systems respond to the needs of victims regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation and other backgrounds. We believe that when victims are part of a disenfranchised group they are more at risk for different forms of violence. The bottom line is the same: all victims deserve safety, dignity and liberty AND we must all be part of the solution.

While the White Ribbon Day campaign will certainly have an impact on victims, victims are not the primary audience for this particular campaign. Massachusetts White Ribbon Day is about addressing the *social norms* that support and foster violence against women. By looking at these issues through a human rights framework, we can then support and deepen understanding of how racism, heterosexism and homophobia, and the other isms manifest and contribute to sexual assault and domestic violence where victims are people of color, GLBTQ (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning) victims, elder victims, victims with disabilities and male victims.

What role do women and girls have in the White Ribbon Day Campaign?

The focus of this statewide campaign is to engage men and boys, and we believe that women and girls have a role to play. Primarily, we encourage women and girls to invite the men and boys in their lives to join the campaign and to ask them to become a White Ribbon Day Ambassador.

Some communities have chosen different approaches to the White Ribbon Campaign by adapting the pledge language and asking individuals regardless of gender to take the pledge.

International Women's Day

By holding the White Ribbon Day Campaign in March, this also allows us to call attention to March as Women's History Month, to recognize March 8th as International Women's Day, and to participate with the international community through the United Nations Secretary General's Campaign, UNited to End Violence Against Women.

What about the day after, what's next?

White Ribbon Day is in March and we encourage communities and groups to operate related follow up activities in the spring following White Ribbon Day utilizing the time and resources of the men and boys who take the White Ribbon Day Pledge. April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month and offers many opportunities for men and boys to participate. Mothers Day is in May and Fathers Day is in June, both of which offer opportunities for events. We suggest operating a fundraiser conducted by men and boys for a local sexual assault and/or domestic violence service agency.