

SURVIVORS' AGENDA

***A Toolkit for
Kitchen Table
Conversations***



INTRODUCTION

Since the #MeToo Movement went viral in October 2017, survivors and organizers have been engaged on all fronts, working to seize this moment to change culture and policy to end sexual harassment and violence, ensuring that the energy and outpouring of survivors' stories result in lasting change. But survivors have not been recognized as an important constituency during this election year.

A coalition of groups including 'me too.' International, the National Women's Law Center, the National Domestic Workers Alliance, Justice for Migrant Women, Girls for Gender Equity, and many more are coming together to host a first-of-its-kind digital Survivors' Summit. This will be a virtual space for organizing and healing for survivors of sexual harassment and violence. The Survivors' Summit will be centered around a Survivors' Agenda: a platform for change co-created with survivors, putting out a call to action for leaders to advance safety, dignity, and equality at work, at school, and in communities.

We are creating a Survivors' Agenda at a moment when our country's systems, values, and humanity are being sorely tested. We are facing a global pandemic that has triggered a health crisis and an economic crisis, both of which are hitting communities of color hardest. At the same time, we are collectively confronting a long legacy of anti-Black racism in policing and our criminal justice system, taking stock of the devastating harm it has caused, and demanding change. In this moment there is a particular need to take stock of the needs of survivors in our communities and to reimagine what safety looks like.

We invite survivors and their allies to contribute to building a Survivors' Agenda that reflects the diversity of our movement and the need for solidarity. You can participate in this effort at home, around your kitchen table, with your loved ones, or online, and with members of your community. Below is a guide to help start that conversation and instructions on how to report back on those conversations to inform the creation of the Survivors' Agenda.

BEFORE YOUR CONVERSATION

Kitchen Table Conversations are one of many ways that survivors' voices will inform the Survivors' Agenda and Survivors' Summit. They are opportunities to engage in directed conversations with your community about how to end sexual harassment and violence.

CONSIDER:

Who would you want to have a conversation about these topics with?

- A good size group is between 5-7 people, but keep in mind the comfort level of your participants. A conversation with family members, for example, might be smaller. For a group of 10-15, a skilled moderator may be needed to direct a larger conversation. Consider who you're inviting into the conversation, and whether a larger group may feel intimidating, or if a smaller group may put people on the spot.
- Try to find people with different experiences and who are coming to the conversation open-minded and with curiosity. Not all participants need to identify as "survivors," though all should come from a place of supporting those who have experienced sexual violence or harassment, and we especially value hearing from people who have experienced some form of gendered or sexual violence or harassment at any point in their lives.

INVITE:

Reach out and invite the people you have identified in your community to engage in this conversation. The Kitchen Table Conversation might take place in your home with your family. Alternatively, it might take place via an electronic meeting platform (such as Zoom).

We encourage all participants to be aware of social distancing guidelines and find creative ways to engage with your community while keeping one another safe. Make sure you are confident that the conversation will be in an environment where you and other participants feel safe and able to speak freely. Your kitchen table may or may not be such a place. If you are using an electronic meeting platform, you may want to use passwords to ensure that only invited participants can take part.

When inviting others to participate, help them have a clear idea of what to expect. Start by sharing the purpose of the conversation.

"We are coming together to discuss our perspectives on how to end sexual harassment and violence and make the world a safer place. This will help inform a national Survivors' Agenda that will be used to uplift a platform for change to advance safety, dignity, and equality at work, at school, and in communities."

Help participants understand how the information discussed at the Kitchen Table Conversations will be used.

“Notes from this conversation will be shared with Survivors’ Agenda organizers, but your name and identifying information will not be shared. You also will be asked to complete an anonymous Survivors’ Agenda survey at the conclusion of the conversation. Individual participants in the Kitchen Table Conversations will not be identified at any point.”

Let participants know how they can learn more about the Survivors’ Agenda and Survivors’ Summit, including where the results of these conversations will be compiled.

“The Survivors’ Agenda will be unveiled at the online Survivors’ Summit in September 2020. You can learn more about the Survivors’ Agenda and the Survivors’ Summit online at www.survivorsagenda.org.”

Finally, coordinate logistics. These conversations will typically take between 1-2 hours. Make sure people know how much time to allot up front, and then be sure to be respectful of people’s time by starting and ending promptly. If you think you might be tight on time, it can be helpful to share the questions ahead of the conversation.

SETTING THE TABLE: OPENING YOUR CONVERSATION AND MAKING IT A SAFER SPACE

A key ingredient to a successful Kitchen Table Conversation is finding ways to make participants feel comfortable, feel secure enough to talk about sensitive topics, and feel heard. A good way to do this is to begin by collaboratively establishing expectations with the group.

- As participants arrive (physically or virtually), welcome them personally. Make introductions to those who might not know one another and help folks feel that they’ve been invited to engage in conversation because you value their perspective and insights.
- Begin on time, if possible.
- Start by reminding participants of the purpose of the conversation, how the information will be used, and where they can find out more information about the Survivors’ Agenda and Survivors’ Summit. Pause to answer any questions the group has about these points.
- It can be very helpful to open the discussion by spending a few minutes brainstorming with participants about how they want to be in conversation together. A few elements that are important to bring up are: confidentiality, validation, and believing others without judgment. There is a sample script below that you can adapt to have this conversation with your group.
- This toolkit asks participants about their own experiences as survivors of sexual harassment and sexual violence. These are sensitive topics and can bring up difficult memories and trauma from participants’ pasts. It is good to make clear at the beginning that no one is expected to share their personal experience unless they want to.

- To navigate these discussions, it's important that you as a facilitator ensure that participants are heard (and are not talked over and do not have their experiences/perspectives dismissed) and that participants are respectful of one another. Simply validating what is shared can be helpful (e.g., *"Thank you for sharing that experience/perspective with us."*).
- This toolkit includes resources for individuals who are upset by the conversations or simply want a space to talk more and get support. You should make these available to all participants at the beginning and end of the conversation, even if you don't recognize that anyone in the group becomes upset. You never know who might find the resources useful.
- While you discuss these questions at your kitchen table, or on a phone call, or video conference call, take notes on the issues that surface the most or that seem the most important, or identify a notetaker at the beginning of the meeting who will record the highlights of the conversation.

SAMPLE COLLABORATIVE EXPECTATION BRAINSTORM

"Before we begin addressing the questions for tonight's conversation, I want to take a couple of minutes to establish ground rules together for how we want this conversation to go. How do you want us to treat one another in this conversation? What will help make you feel secure enough to share your personal experiences and perspective on these important topics?"

Allow silence so people can think of their answers and offer ideas. If no one has any ideas, or after a few people share, you can prompt with these additions:

"Particularly when talking about things like violence and safety, it's really important to find ways to respect one another. What are ways to demonstrate respect in this conversation?"
(Might include: only one person speaking at a time, making space for people who are more quiet to share, assuming the best intentions of the speaker while also holding one another accountable - there's no perfect set of ground rules but try to identify a few tools that will work for your group.)

"Confidentiality is really important to these kinds of conversations. Can we agree not to repeat any personal stories that are shared tonight?"

"Survivors often have their experiences questioned. I believe that every person here is an expert in their own lives, and that each of you knows more about your own experiences than I do. Can we agree not to question the stories that are shared here, to believe each person's personal account, and to validate what is shared?"

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE CONVERSATION

As you discuss these questions, take notes on the issues that surface the most or that the group feels are most important (or ask a notetaker to do so for you). These notes will help you report back about the conversation to inform the Survivors' Agenda.

- Where are the places that you feel the most vulnerable?
- What brings you a sense of security (in the workplace, community, or elsewhere)?
- What do you think is included when we say “sexual harassment”? How about “sexual violence”?
- What does a community without sexual violence or sexual harassment look like?
- If you have sought help to address sexual violence or sexual harassment, what was most helpful to you? What resources and information have you had success accessing? Where and how did you find out about them?
- What systems need to change to end sexual violence or sexual harassment, or to change the way we address it? For examples of what it means to change systems, see the Case Studies in Systemic Change at the end of this toolkit. These examples can help you imagine what change might look like. Think about the various places in which sexual violence and harassment occurs, and the various ways that sexual violence and harassment could be prevented. For example:
 - What needs to change in workplaces so that everyone can work free from sexual harassment and violence?
 - What needs to change in schools so that everyone can learn safely?
 - What needs to change within the health care system to ensure that everyone can access services safely and without discrimination?
 - What needs to change so that everyone has a safe living environment?
 - What needs to change on the streets so that everyone can move through communities free from sexual violence and harassment?
 - What needs to change in policing and in our criminal justice system to create justice and healing?
 - What community-based alternatives to the criminal justice system would meet the needs of survivors?
- What resources do communities need to create justice and healing?
- What is the most important thing that needs to change to help survivors of sexual violence and sexual harassment?
- Who needs to be accountable for making this change happen?
- How can elected officials and others help make that vision a reality? Think about a range of leaders—for example:
 - The President
 - Congress
 - Governors
 - Mayors

- Judges
 - Police
 - Employers
 - School boards
- What are the barriers to this vision?
 - What role can you play in helping make change happen? (E.g., voting, writing to lawmakers, volunteering, organizing in your community, running for office.)

AFTER YOUR CONVERSATION: SUPPORTING CHANGE AND SHARING YOUR VISION WITH THE SURVIVORS' AGENDA ORGANIZERS

At the end of the conversation:

- Ask participants to form an intention about how they can support change and to share it with each other.
- Encourage your group to participate in the online Survivors' Summit in September (more info at www.survivorsagenda.org)
- Thank participants for their time and for their willingness to participate in this conversation.
- Ask each of them to now go to the Survivors' Agenda survey at www.survivorsagenda.org and complete the survey while the conversation that you just had is fresh in their mind. Their answers will help inform the Survivors' Agenda.

*The Survivors' Summit organizers also especially want to hear from you as the moderator. Please go to www.survivorsagenda.org to the **Kitchen Table Conversation Report Back Form** to submit your answers to the below questions. Look back at your notes to refresh your memory. Feel free to skip any questions that your group did not discuss or that the notes didn't capture. (You are also encouraged to complete the survey at www.survivorsagenda.org, but your answers to the questions below will provide important additional information.)*

- How many people participated in your Kitchen Table Conversation?
- If an organization hosted this conversation, what is the name of the organization?
- What state do you live in? If some or all of the other participants live in other states, identify the states the participants live in, if you know.
- What topics were mentioned most frequently in your conversation?
- What were some of the most common feelings and thoughts?

- What systems changes seemed most important or promising to those in the conversation? (You may not have discussed all of the contexts below; complete as applicable.)
 - At work:
 - In schools:
 - In housing:
 - In health care:
 - In the criminal justice system:
 - In communities:
- What did participants feel was the most important thing that must change in order for survivors of sexual violence and sexual harassment to find justice and healing?
- Who are the leaders who are most important for making change?
- What were the biggest challenges identified?
- What actions, if any, did participants commit to undertaking personally?
- Is there any additional information about your discussion you'd like to share with us?
- Do you have any reflections on the process of convening and facilitating this conversation? (This can be personal reflections on your experience, or feedback that might be useful to others hosting Kitchen Table Conversations or to the organizers.)
- Are you interested in hosting another Kitchen Table Conversation? (We encourage people who enjoy this experience to host multiple conversations!)

Above all else, thank you for your courage and compassion hosting this conversation. You are helping to shape an important part of our drive towards social justice.

CASE STUDIES IN SYSTEMIC CHANGE

What do we mean when we ask what systems need to change to end sexual harassment and violence? We mean changing the way institutions work so that survivors are treated more fairly. We also mean changing the way laws and policies protect people, so that they're less at risk of sexual harassment and violence in the first place.

To spark your imagination, below are several case studies that provide examples of how we can change systems to bring us closer to a world without sexual harassment and violence.

LEGISLATING POLICE TRANSPARENCY

According to a 2010 analysis, the second-most-frequently reported form of police misconduct, after excessive force, is sexual misconduct by police. The International Association of Police Chiefs has recognized the magnitude of the problem and has described sexual abuse and harassment by police as an issue that “warrants the full attention of law enforcement leadership.”

But disciplinary records and citizen complaints against police officers across the U.S. are largely kept secret, which can shield police officers who sexually assault civilians from accountability. In 23 states, and the District of Columbia, a police officer's disciplinary history is mostly unavailable through public records requests. In 15 states, police disciplinary records are available to the public in severe situations, such as a suspension or termination, while the rest are confidential. In 12 states, police disciplinary records are generally available to the public, but records of unsubstantiated complaints or active investigations are still confidential.

In New York, Section 50-a of the state's Civil Rights Law made personnel records for law enforcement confidential. That includes internal affairs files, civilian complaints and disciplinary findings.

In June of 2020, in response to longtime organizing efforts and protests across the state and the nation demanding an end to racist police violence, the New York State Legislature repealed Section 50-a. It also passed the Police STAT Act, which requires the state to collect and publicly report demographic information ranging from low-level arrests to in-custody deaths. Making police officer records publicly available can help hold police officers who engage in sexual abuse and racist violence to account.

COALITION OF IMMOKALEE WORKERS' FAIR FOOD PROGRAM

Based in Immokalee, Florida, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) is a worker-based human rights organization internationally recognized for its achievements in the fields of social responsibility, human trafficking, and gender-based violence at work. Over half a million women work on farms in the U.S., growing and harvesting the food we eat. The overwhelming majority of them - up to 80 percent - suffer pervasive sexual harassment, and/or sexual violence in the workplace.

Between 1995 and 2000, the CIW organized several major protests that led to the creation of the Fair Food Program (FFP), a unique partnership among farmers, farmworkers, and retail food companies that ensures humane wages and working conditions for the workers who pick fruits and vegetables on participating farms.

As a result of the CIW's organizing efforts, including making consumers aware of the labor conditions faced by farmworkers, retail food companies who purchase from the farmers agreed to consider the working conditions of farmworkers when making purchases.

Fourteen major supermarkets, fast food restaurants and food service companies have committed to purchase only from growers that implement a code of conduct with zero tolerance provisions for sexual assault, forced labor and child labor, and a range of other protections, including the right to work free of sexual harassment and to raise complaints without retaliation.

CIW waged public campaigns to get the farmers to sign legal agreements with the food companies that set working standards. Now, workers are hired directly by the farmers and considered to be employees, rather than independent contractors or subcontractors without legal protections. CIW won the right to go onto the farms to reach employees to provide worker-to-worker training about their rights. Management takes part in education programs, as well. The companies fund an outside monitoring organization that checks to make sure the farmers are complying with the rules; if they don't follow the rules, they can't sell food to the companies.

In seven states - from Florida to New Jersey, impacting 35,000 agricultural workers - the Fair Food Program has brought an end to impunity for sexual violence and other forms of sexual harassment on participating farms. Cases of sexual harassment by supervisors with physical contact of any kind have been virtually eliminated and workers consistently report dramatic reductions in all forms of harassment.

RAISING WAGES FOR TIPPED WORKERS

The federal minimum cash wage for tipped workers has been frozen at \$2.13 per hour for nearly three decades. This means employers can pay people working for tips as little as \$2.13 per hour as long as tips bring them up to the minimum wage. The majority of people's wages, then, are paid by the customers.

Women, who represent over two-thirds of tipped workers nationally, are hit especially hard by this poverty-level wage. Because nearly all their income comes from tips, they are forced to tolerate unwanted and inappropriate behavior from customers in order to make good tips. An overwhelming majority of tipped workers have reported experiencing sexual harassment on the job.

A number of states, however, require employers to pay tipped employees the regular minimum wage regardless of tips. People in these "One Fair Wage" states receive a paycheck from their employer and can count on being paid at least the minimum wage in every pay period. They are, therefore, less reliant on customer's whims in order to support their families.

Raising the minimum wage—and ensuring that tipped workers receive the full minimum wage before tips—can empower women to push back against sexual harassment, advance equal pay for women and economic security for their families.

ENSURING COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION

Young people have the right to lead healthy lives, and society has the responsibility to prepare youth by providing them with comprehensive sexual health education that gives them the tools

they need to make healthy decisions. It is not enough for sex education programs to include discussions of abstinence and contraception to help young people avoid unintended pregnancy or disease. Comprehensive sexual health education, which includes education about consent, helps young people learn about healthy relationships, including how to prevent sexual harassment and assault.

Schools can adopt the National Sexuality Education Standards and require comprehensive sexual health programs, and data suggests that this helps protect students from sexual assault. For example, a 2018 study by Columbia University found that formal instruction in high school about consent and “how to say no to sex” was significantly associated with reduced risk for penetrative sexual assault overall (8%) and among women (10%) in college, while abstinence-only education did not significantly reduce the risk of college sexual assault.

SANCTUARY CITIES PROTECTIONS FOR IMMIGRANTS

Sexual violence often occurs in the context of domestic violence, which remains a serious public problem in the U.S. This is especially so in Latinx communities, where one in three women are victims of domestic violence in their lifetimes. Yet, fewer than 50 percent of Latina women who experience domestic violence report it to law enforcement, with lack of confidence in the police and fear they might be asked about their immigration status, or that of relatives and friends, as two important motives for not reporting.

Some cities have adopted sanctuary policies that limit the cooperation of local law enforcement with federal immigration authorities. Cities adopting these policies typically prohibit local police or other city workers from asking about immigration status or collecting immigration data from individuals they encounter or arrest, refuse to enter into contracts with the federal government to hold immigrants in detention, restrict the ability of local police to make arrests for federal immigration violations, restrict immigration enforcement in sensitive locations like hospitals and schools, and issue local identification documents and driver’s licenses without regard to immigration status.

A May 2020 study by the Center for Growth and Opportunity found that sanctuary city policies have contributed to lowering domestic homicides rates among Latina women between 52 and 62 percent. The impact is particularly large in counties with higher immigration enforcement and in those with more female officers. Sanctuary policies provide a true sanctuary for Latina women against domestic violence.