

*NATIONAL COALITION OF SOUTH ASIAN ORGANIZATIONS
STATEMENT FROM SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS AND ALLIES
JANUARY 15, 2013*

The horror of what one woman on a bus in Delhi endured is something that goes beyond our imagination. In her senseless death, we confront not just her story, but also the stories of countless women and girls who, on a daily basis, endure some aspect of her pain. We also see the place of women in our world - how we are all at risk of harassment and sexual assault and systemic injustices that lead to silence and inaction. We recognize that there are women and girls who have similar experiences with no one to fight for their lives.

We know that these tragedies are not isolated to India alone. They happen throughout the South Asian subcontinent, and the rest the world, including the United States of America. One in four women in the US will experience domestic violence and one in six will experience sexual violence. One in three women experienced child sexual abuse. Girls who do not follow strict gender norms are three times as likely as their heterosexual and heteronormative counterparts of being sexually assaulted in their lives.

We will also not forget the absent, the silenced, and the missing. The girls who grow up ignored, neglected and passed over because of their gender. The human beings who have no story and no champion in much of our work to end violence against women because we think of gender as two distinct realities, rather than a spectrum of realities. The ones who endure silently, who die unmourned, who struggle every day of their lives in order to build better ones for their families.

What happened on a bus in Delhi was beyond our imagination. We can, however, imagine how to change our ourselves and our communities. We can work hard to make changes in how we view one other, and how we value every member in our society so that this does not, cannot, happen again.

What can we do?

We can value our girls, and support them to become vibrant members of our community.

We can value our boys and raise them to respect women and girls.

We can do more to be inclusive to the LGBT members of our families and community.

We can make sure not to turn a blind eye, a deaf ear, or a cold shoulder to violence in our community.

We can provide safe spaces and support for survivors of violence.

We can build our capacity to prevent and respond to violence.

We can say, "We're not going to tolerate this anymore. We are not going to endure the catcalls, the leers, the unwanted language, touching, contact of any kind."

We can build spaces to talk about that which is silenced.

We can pass stronger laws and enact policies that will protect women, and ensure that victims of crime can access safe, culturally sensitive services.

We can draw strength from our community to know we are not doing this work alone.

We can build bridges between our community and others to stand united against violence and hate.

We are a collective of South Asian Women's Organizations. We work in the U.S. with South Asian survivors of domestic and sexual violence and striving to strengthen our larger community and end gender-based violence. We stand in solidarity with our allies in India, the U.S. and all across the globe who work towards strong communities and families, human rights for all and a world in which every life is valued.

API Chaya
Apna Ghar, Inc. (Our Home)
ASHA for Women
Daya, Inc.
MAI Family Services
Maitri
Manavi, Inc.
Raksha
Sakhi for South Asian Women
Sneha, Inc.
South Asian Network (SAN)
Turning Point for Women and Families

We are allies of these South Asian women's organizations and we stand in solidarity with their work to end gender-based violence and with our shared goals of promoting and protecting the rights and safety of the South Asian community in the US.

Counselors Helping (South) Asians / Indians, Inc. (CHAI)
Chhaya CDC
Indo-American Center
Saathi of Rochester, NY
South Asian Youth Action (SAYA!)
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Asian American Policy & Research Institute (SAAPRI)
South Asian Council for Social Services (SACSS)
The Sikh Coalition
UNITED SIKHS