

SPRING/SUMMER 2020

THE WOARRIOR WORD

The WOAR - Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence Newsletter



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Opinion: During the pandemic Philadelphia has been dealing with a silent epidemic of sexual violence (From [Generocity](#); July 14, 2020)

*Monique S. Howard, EdD, MPH
WOAR Executive Director*

We are in the midst of a public health crisis.

Philadelphia and the rest of the nation are entrenched in the pandemic. For the past four months, COVID-19 has disrupted our sense of normalcy, it has altered the way we live, conduct business, and, interact with people. The entire world has experienced stay-at-home orders and quarantines to quell the incidence of the virus.

For many people, the coronavirus-related stay-at-

home order has resulted in victims of sexual violence being quarantined with their abusers. These victims are children or adults.

The sexual violence that occurs during the stay-at-home order is continual and does not let up.

The violence is compounded by additional stress related to loss of a job, the potential for housing/hunger insecurity and, sudden loss of childcare, or unprepared homeschooling of school-aged children.

These variables compounded with gender inequities and power hierarchies result in increased

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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stressors in the home and ultimately an increase in sexual violence.

Women and children are suddenly removed from the people and services that provided safety and protection. Children who rely on mandated reporting to recognize signs of child sexual abuse are no longer in contact with those professionals. Coworkers who would lend a caring ear and support are no longer accessible.

Victims of sexual violence are alone and attempting to survive. They cannot call for help. They think that no one hears them and they suffer in silence.

In May, 2020, amid the coronavirus pandemic, civil unrest occurred. COVID-19 and its effects were compounded with the latest social justice emergency. Once again, a Black man was murdered at the hands of law enforcement.

Philadelphia had to manage not only a pandemic, but protests and a resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, which exacerbated sexual violence as Philadelphia is focused on containing the spread of COVID-19 and the violence in the streets.

The result is; between the months of mid-March until today, ***Philadelphia has been dealing with a silent epidemic of sexual violence interwoven into the fabric of a pandemic and civil unrest.*** An epidemic of a magnitude we will not know until people return to work, virtual learning is over and children are once again in view of teacher, counselors and support staff.

Our families, particularly our children are suffering. COVID-19 and the negative impact of civil unrest are creating a perfect storm for gender-based crime. We will not know its impact until Philadelphia has adopted its 'new normal'. When people can interact with friends, peers and colleagues; when youth-serving professionals can put their eye on children and adolescents. When people can receive the help and support that they have been requesting.

Through it, all, WOAR-Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence is poised to provide much needed support and guidance to individuals who have experienced sexual assault during this time. We are ready to handle the increase in hotline calls today, tomorrow, and when our 'normal' is created.

If you are a victim or someone you know is experiencing sexual violence, don't hesitate to contact the 24-hour hotline at (215) 985-3333 or visit our website to access our chat line at www.woar.org.

If you see something, say something!

WOAR stands in solidarity with the Black community against systemic racism, an oppression experienced every day in our City of Philadelphia and in America.

We stand with our Black staff, volunteers, partners, #WOARRIORS, and the entire Black community.

We stand with you in peaceful protest of injustice against any member of our community.

There are no words for comfort now and all emotions people are feeling are valid. Racism is unacceptable. We are hopeful the work of the anti-racism movement will make a difference.

Our office will always be a safe place and we will continue to support our community with love, healing, and respect.



DIRECT SERVICES SCOOP

Gratitude: Now & Always to our Volunteers

Siddharth Menon
24-HR Services Manager

2020 has been a trying time. Since March, many of us are confined to our homes lacking a very basic necessity for most people - human contact. We have thanked the doctors and nurses and first responders, as well as the store clerks and the postal workers and trash collectors and all the other services that have been provided for us through this trying time. However, there is a group that has not been collectively recognized in the same way, despite offering vital services, and those are volunteers.

At WOAR, our volunteers are not just voices on the phone. They are people who are affected by the same things everyone else is affected by and not to mention the vicarious trauma some experience when operating our hotline. They are worried about their loved ones. They are worried about their jobs and their bills. They are worried about whether or not their children will be returning to school in the fall. They are worried about where their lives will be in the coming months. They were hurt and angered by the death of George Floyd.

In spite of all of this, our volunteers have put in 2,500 hours in service to other people since the beginning of quarantine. To be clear, this number is not for the year. This number is from March 16 to June 30.

26 people gave 2,500 hours of themselves in three and a half months, with no incentive other than the opportunity to help others. Let us all take a moment to reflect on this and for just a moment, put the stresses and outrages and worries about everyday life to the side so that we can be grateful to have people like our volunteers in the world.

EDUCATION ENLIGHTENMENT

WOAR's New Hybrid Education Services

Teresa M. White-Walston
Director of Education & Training

Each year, the WOAR's Education Department facilitates over 1,000 in-person workshops, trainings, and psycho-educational groups. The onset of COVID-19 forced an unprecedented and immediate response in Philadelphia—a stay-at-home order which closed schools, services, and businesses, cutting off the Education Department's access to the hundreds of individuals reached through prevention programming.

According to the [Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network \(RAINN\)](#), a person is sexually assaulted every 73 seconds in the United States, and every nine minutes the victim is a child. WOAR-Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence, is a critical care agency which remained open during the COVID-19 pandemic. The agency invoked its Catastrophic Operations Plan, and the staff began working remotely to provide services. The Education Staff made phone calls and sent emails to schools and community partners assuring partners that WOAR's vital prevention programming would be accessible online. Partners were also reminded that WOAR's crisis support services were operational.

The *silver lining* in the stay-at-home order is that the Education Department used the time to transition in-person trainings to web-based trainings. WOAR's Education Department now offers a new hybrid program. Schools and community agencies can receive training online, in-person or through a combination of both (*when it will be safe to do so*).

The Education Department launched its new web-based services in April 2020, Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Interested in volunteering for our hotline or other areas at WOAR? Email volunteer@woar.org or complete our [inquiry form](#).

EDUCATION ENLIGHTENMENT

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Senior Education and Training Specialist, LaQuisha Anthony, hosted a three-part Instagram Live event, **Crafts & Conversations**, featuring special guests from the food and beverage industry. LaQuisha and her guests discussed the importance of practicing safety when serving or consuming alcohol to prevent alcohol-facilitated sexual assault, the mission of WOAR's [Safe Bars Philly](#) initiative.



In the months of May and June, Quinn Pellerito, WOAR's LGBTQ Education and Training Specialist, facilitated professional developments using ZOOM to train members of Philadelphia's Legal Community in trauma-informed care for LGBTQ victim/survivors of sexual violence. ZOOM trainings to prevent child sexual abuse of children with special needs were facilitated for parents by Education and Training Director, Teresa White-Walston. Education and Training Specialists Joey Brodsky and Arthi Selvan cohost a Netflix watch party for teens and young adults on Instagram Live. Schools have begun scheduling web-based services for the fall 2020 school term.

According to [RAINN](#), an increase in incidents of sexual violence reports will rise resulting from the shelter-in-place order. In response, WOAR's Education Department is prepared to provide technical assistance, training and support using its new hybrid services.

To contact WOAR's Education Department or to schedule educational services, visit at www.woar.org.

VOICES OF A #WOARRIOR

Intern to staff #WOARRIOR and Staying Strong

*Kianna Voorhees, MA
Support Group Counselor*

Sexual violence is a pervasive issue that is not talked about enough in our society. I thought that it would be great to complete my internship at WOAR, so that I could help survivors heal from sexual trauma and also advocate for political reform so that the voices of survivors could finally be heard. As a counseling intern, I led support groups for survivors, held individual counseling sessions, and responded to crisis hotline calls. It was a great experience to put my education into practice for a worthy cause. I believe that I learned a lot more about counseling during my internship than I did during my lectures at college.

Although my professors taught me about counseling theories and useful techniques, applying those

VOICES OF A #WOARRIOR

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outside of the classroom taught me a lot about connecting to others as a professional counselor. My internship was a time where I felt a lot of anxiety about whether I would be able to help my clients, or if I would be any good at counseling. After I worked through this anxiety with my supervisor, I realized that it's okay to make mistakes sometimes, as long as I'm honest about when I'm struggling and ask for help when I need it.

The transition from working in the office to working remotely was rough. I could no longer meet with my clients in-person or hold support groups. I continued therapy sessions over the phone, which was a very difficult adjustment for me and my clients. I could no longer pay attention to body language and facial expressions, which definitely informs a lot of my practice. However, I was able to work with the information I was given and was still able to help my clients work toward their treatment goals.

One good thing that came out of working remotely was my ability to prioritize my self-care. I had a little more freedom during the day to go outside and take a walk, or take a power nap during the day if I needed it. Having this time for myself helped me to be more attentive and focused for my clients, and also helped me to stay centered during my day.

I'm really excited to be continuing my experience at WOAR as a Support Group Counselor. I definitely enjoyed leading groups as an intern and loved how survivors would interact with and encourage each other on their healing journeys. I hope to incorporate meditation and mindfulness practices in some groups I lead, as I believe it is a useful mental health tool for many people.

Learn more about WOAR services and call our 24/7 hotline at [215-985-3333](tel:215-985-3333).

NEW STAFF & UPDATES

Meet our Newest Staff #WOARRIORS!

Rebecca Aronow (she/they) is a Crisis Advocate at WOAR. She currently also works as a community organizer in the city, creating and promoting events that often support social justice causes. She is grateful to be a part of WOAR and is looking forward to providing direct support to people in the city.



Fun Fact: Rebecca has two big cats that were rescued from a fire, one is all black and one is all white.

Jasoleil Cineus, MA is a master's level counselor with the WOAR - Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence. Jasoleil's pronouns are she/her.



Fun Fact: Jasoleil has an immense love for animals, especially her pitbull, Fitz, and her chihuahua, Stevie.

NEW STAFF & UPDATES

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Priscilla DiDio (she/her) is a Community Outreach Worker at WOAR. She previously worked at Children Crisis Treatment Center providing therapeutic bilingual support in schools, homes, and community settings to children who have experienced significant trauma/abuse. She is excited to build new relationships and connect more with communities at WOAR to spread awareness.



Fun Fact: Priscilla likes to travel and run.

Nayah Nicholson is WOAR's new Office Manager - HR Specialist. Nayah's pronouns are she/her/hers.



Lila E. Slovak, Esq. (she/her) has joined the team as WOAR's Policy Director. In this new role, Lila will be working to strengthen and advance WOAR's public policy agenda at the city and state levels.

Lila, a former WOAR hotline volunteer, brings a range of experience as a litigator and as an advocate for marginalized women and girls, including representing survivors of sexual assault and reporting on the impact of sexual violence on girls in Philadelphia. She is excited for the opportunity to expand WOAR's impact through collaboration and systemic advocacy.



Fun Fact: Lila loves all things related to the beach, and has a secret desire to learn to surf.

Samuelle Voltaire (she/they) a licensed Social Worker (LSW) with a passion for sexual health education as well as providing trauma-informed mental health care for survivors of sexual trauma, Black, Indigenous, People of color (BIPOC), and those with intersecting BIPOC LGBTQ+ identities. Samuelle has years of experience in public health research and in providing mental health crisis intervention services. Samuelle currently works as a Counselor with WOAR.

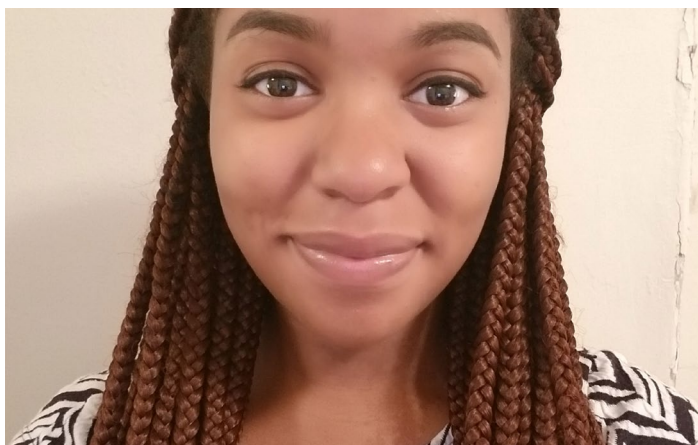


Fun Fact: In their spare time, Samuelle enjoys baking sweets from scratch as well as hanging out with her partner and their two black cats.

NEW STAFF & UPDATES

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Kianna Voorhees (she/her) is the new Support Group Counselor. Kianna graduated from Rosemont College with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology. She started an Intern Counselor last year while completing her Master's degree. She is excited to begin her new position! Kianna is passionate about helping others heal from trauma and enjoys incorporating meditation and mindfulness-based practices.



Fun Fact: Kianna was taught to sing opera in high school.

Although many factors have kept us apart and our office doors closed for now, we're STILL OPEN and working harder than ever to provide care and end sexual violence for all.

Here are some things happening at WOAR.



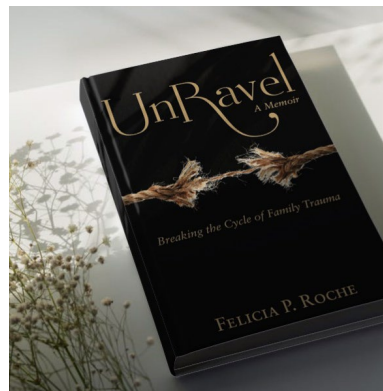
Meet us outside on **Saturday, Sept 26** for this virtual event to band together as a community, to ease any stress from quarantine and social unrest by staying active, and walk out to support and end to sexual violence.

Register & Donate TODAY!

www.woar.org/woarrior-walk/

Join us online as Executive Director, Dr. Monique S. Howard, shares highlights from the past fiscal year and what's still in store for us at WOAR. Time TBD soon! Visit our FB page.

www.facebook.com/woar-phila/live



Our Education & Training team is taking a journey through writer and mental health advocate Felicia Roche's *Unraveled*. Our Book Club is open for you! Complete our interest form.

www.woar.org/community-events/

Calling all Yoga Instructors! We're looking for co-facilitators for our Trauma Processing Yoga Group (TPYG). Training provided! Interested?

Email kiannav@woar.org.



Until next time, please remember our 24-Hour hotline is always available for calls, texts, and chats at (215) 985-3333.