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NAME Statement on Sexual Harassment and Assault

The National Association for Multicultural Education applauds the women and men who have recently called out their violent attackers in public. We recognize that stepping out from the long shadows of fear to put a spotlight on the perpetrators who have committed these terrible attacks still carries huge personal and professional risks. These survivors have centered national attention on the abuse of power and control that (mostly) men in positions of institutional power have wielded like a weapon. As a social justice and equity organization, NAME knows that this country must not tolerate the physical, mental, emotional and psychological assaults, which affect survivors for the duration of our lives. It also invades schools in the trauma children suffer either from sexual abuse or sexual harassment directly or from knowing it was inflicted on a family member or close friend. Educators aren't immune from the trauma either because it spills into classrooms, becoming the noise that disrupts learning and teaching. People are increasingly giving voice to the pains and wounds of this oft-sanctioned violence, adding their voices to long histories of survivors who have raised their voices. Speaking out is an initial part of the healing process. NAME also recognizes that many are still unable to articulate what they have suffered and are unable to identify their attackers. We applaud survivors while also recognizing that most public voices have been privileged, wealthy, and white women. Those with limited institutional power, women of color, LGBTQIA communities, children, and others structurally excluded remain institutionally silenced.

Recently accused perpetrators include political candidates, U.S. senators and representatives, current and former presidents, national network broadcast anchors, world-renowned actors, comedians, movie moguls, athletes, coaches, and highly visible others. Some have apologized, some face ethics hearings, and a few have been fired, but far too few abusers have lost their jobs and positions of power. And others remain unrepentant as if their positions entitle them to be abusive, reflecting the same brazen disregard for life that the president of the United States continues to embody.

NAME underscores that no resignations, firings, court settlements or jury awards can come close to compensating individuals or our free society for the losses in freedom of movement, freedom of association, freedom of speech and freedom to pursue happiness unmolested that sexual harassment, sexual assault, and intentional violence take away. These are non-negotiable constitutional concerns and we are only beginning to name some of the horrendous acts that large segments of society survive (and some who did not survive).

Just as distressing as the current cases of sexual harassments and sexual assaults, is the fact that this eruption is occurring in the news now, but in a few weeks, will likely pass. And with the passing, the public outrage will diminish until survivors again summon the courage and risks to step from the shadows of fear to expose new horrors. Like gun violence and mass shootings, the cycle of outrage and silence will occur once again with no substantive action.

NAME insists that the recurring atrocities by those wielding power end once and for all. The NAME community reflects and represents survivors of these sexist, racist, heterosexist, classist, and deeply violent attacks. Multicultural education offers a concrete solution with the inclusion of all people's stories and history of accomplishments in pre-K through college teachings, textbooks and curriculum. Exposing the dominant Eurocentric, white-male-centered narrative as one of oppressive violence intending to abuse and colonize is imperative to empowering all who believe in bell hooks' notion of a liberatory education.

NAME knows it is long-past time to make this change. But for social justice, equity and each new generation, it is never too late.