



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
ACTIONALLIANCE

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PRESS STATEMENT

Sexual and Domestic Violence Coalition Hosts Conference Addressing Violence Against African-American Communities, Focuses on Racial Justice

Richmond, VA – The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (Action Alliance), Virginia’s leading voice on sexual and intimate partner violence, hosts this week The Warmth of Other Suns: Multi-Disciplinary Strategies to Prevent and Respond to Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence in African-American Communities. This conference, the first of its kind in Virginia, is bringing together policymakers, movement makers, thought leaders, professionals, advocates, and community members to focus on how to integrate racial justice into work to address and prevent sexual and domestic violence.

“Survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence, unfortunately, are not able to get help and justice on a level playing field,” said Kristi VanAudenrove, Executive Director of the Action Alliance, “Advocates working to address and reduce sexual and intimate partner violence are beginning to notice that conducting work through a lens of racial justice is essential to doing good advocacy.”

The conference focuses on describing how systems of oppression intersect to limit opportunities for justice and healing for survivors of trauma. Highlights of the conference include: opening remarks from Delegate Jennifer L. McClellan; Nubia Peña speaking about the “School to Prison Pipeline;” local movement maker Performing Statistics; Charlene Allen and Dr. Kirk James sharing about their groundbreaking initiative Healing Works; Monica Simpson of SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective; and Dr. Russell Jones of Virginia Tech exploring historical and community trauma.

“Too often, trauma experienced by African-American individuals and communities is ignored. To make matters worse, normal trauma reactions exhibited by survivors of color--for example, a traumatized student in school who exhibits anger--are misinterpreted and labeled as defiant or combative behavior, then criminalized and punished. We are locking up kids who have suffered trauma, rather than helping them heal. This has to stop,” said VanAudenrove, “Our practice and focus in Virginia is shifting toward looking at how to dismantle oppressive systems in order to give everyone an equal chance at health and safety. Our Virginia communities deserve no less.”

This conference was made possible in part by the Virginia Department of Social Services, the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, and The Virginia Victims Fund.

The Warmth of Other Suns Conference is taking place August 10-12, 2016 in downtown Richmond, Virginia. To learn more about the conference, visit <https://warmthofothersunsconference.org/>. To learn more about the Action Alliance, visit <http://www.vsdvalliance.org>.

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