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NSVRC Statement on Guilty Verdict in Bill Cosby Trial

Harrisburg, PA – *Following the announcement of a guilty verdict in the criminal trial of comedian Bill Cosby, National Sexual Violence Resource Center Chief Public Affairs Officer Kristen Houser issued the following statement:*

“The Cosby verdict is a long-awaited and symbolic victory for many survivors of sexual violence. It brings hope that justice can be served when victims are finally ready to enter the court system, that it is possible for the truth to be heard, even if it is years after the assault.

“The thousands of individual voices within the #MeToo movement have created a powerful chorus that is being heard. We hope there is a renewed sense of purpose for the women who bravely testified in this trial and endured being blamed, shamed, and made out to be con artists. Your experiences matter, as does your willingness to speak about them. You were heard by the jury and thousands of other survivors.

“Sexual assault is a serious and widespread problem that has a lasting impact on individuals, families and communities and burdens our society with major health and safety issues. It is vital to our society that we continue to hold those who commit sexual violence accountable, regardless of their position in the community, their power, their fame, or their wealth. The effective investigation and prosecution of cases at every level is key to changing the way our society responds to survivors of assault.

“We all have a role to play in preventing sexual violence. In this case, and many others, there were opportunities for bystanders to step in and intervene. Enacting real and lasting change will require everyone to continue making sexual violence prevention a priority now and in the future.”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- **Sexual contact without consent is sexual assault:** Even when it takes a victim years to come forward or when they struggle to identify as a victim, these reactions are not qualifications for an experience to be categorized as rape – sexual contact without consent is sexual assault. Many people who sexually offend use drugs and alcohol strategically to make victims more vulnerable. A person who is intoxicated and/or substantially impaired cannot give consent.

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- **Disclosure is a process:** When sexual assault reports are made, delayed and partial reports are normal, and should be expected. This is especially common in cases where the victim knows the perpetrator. When the assailant is a person in a position of power or trust, reporting is even more unlikely. In the immediate aftermath of a sexual assault, it is very common for victims to try to resume their normal lives as if it didn't happen – they go to work, attend school, and keep appointments. Many victims experience intense disbelief, particularly when the offender is someone they know and trust.
- **Taking the step to disclose requires acknowledging the assault and makes coping with it a central priority:** Trauma impacts how those who experience sexual assault and violence respond, process and recall memories, and how victims integrate the experience into their lives. Strong feelings of guilt, shame, self-blame, and denial are common. Disclosure is impacted by difficult feelings as well as the intense range of emotions victims experience in the immediate and long-term aftermath of an assault. Many survivors struggle to self-identify as victims of rape, but this doesn't change the fact that they may have been the victim of sexual abuse. In a society that holds victims responsible for sexual assault, it is normal for survivors to find it difficult to acknowledge that they have been raped and cope with the strong feelings of self-blame.
- **Victims of sexual assault often face consequences coming forward:** In addition to initial denial, there are many reasons why someone might not disclose what was done to them: fear of not being believed, worries about retaliation or job loss, concern that their social circle and supports will be disrupted, fears of privacy invasions and being made the subject of gossip and slander, and even distrust of law enforcement. Unfortunately, these fears are well founded in many instances, and examples of these insensitive and intrusive responses are readily available in communities and media across the country.

ABOUT NSVRC

The [National Sexual Violence Resource Center \(NSVRC\)](#) is the leading nonprofit in providing information and tools to prevent and respond to sexual violence. NSVRC translates research and trends into best practices that help individuals, communities and service providers achieve real and lasting change. The center also works with the media to promote informed reporting. Every April, NSVRC leads Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), a campaign to educate and engage the public in addressing this widespread issue. NSVRC is also one of the three founding organizations of Raliance, a national, collaborative initiative dedicated to ending sexual violence in one generation.

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