

## *California Coalition Against Sexual Assault*

### **Sandusky sentencing, an opportunity to promote idea that violence is preventable**

By Sandra Henriquez on October 9, 2012

Today Jerry Sandusky was sentenced to 30 – 60 years in prison, for convictions on 45 counts of sexual abuse against children. The sentencing comes on the end of a trial that in 2012 has increased visibility and awareness around childhood sexual abuse, much like the OJ Simpson trial did for victims of domestic violence. We recognize the personal strength of the victims who endured the abuse and the courage of those who were able to come forward and testify against him, in order to ensure that he can no longer harm other children.

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We also take this time to reflect upon what lessons we as society have learned from these two trials:

- 1) We have learned that perpetrators can be and are everyday people, familiar and trusted faces. In terms of sexual violence, today we recognize that a belief that perpetrators are those lurking in the shadows opens us up to increased risk. These types of myths cause us to look for the “monster” and in so doing, ignore the warning signs that can help to protect our children from abuse. Daily we are learning more about offenders and understanding that they are not all the same, recognizing instead that they are those people around us that we often know and trust, that some are more likely to reoffend than others (NSVRC, [People who commit sexual violence fact sheet](#)).
- 2) Honoring the victims – We have learned that the victim’s experiences must be honored. While we are outraged about the bystanders that stood by and did not protect the children in this case, we must be sure to honor the victims who have had the strength and courage to come forward in such a high profile case. In the words of Judge Cleland to the victims in this case “It is for your courage and not for your assault that you will be remembered.”
- 3) Violence is preventable – Today we recognize that sexual violence can be prevented. Part of the way that we respect and honor the experiences of sexual assault survivors is by seizing the opportunity, by creating opportunity, by

ensuring that people's victimization serves as a catalyst for change... and that we continue to work towards the elimination of sexual violence.

What can we as advocates and members of society do today to ensure that we are change agents? Now is the time to be proactive, to talk to the media, mobilize communities to work with child and youth serving organizations to implement policies that will protect children (see [link to ATSA](#) below), to educate parents and family about risk and protective factors, to work with bystanders on how to develop intervention strategies. Today is the time to turn our outrage in to action, to seize the opportunity and to actualize our belief that violence is preventable!

To see a statement from the NSVRC:

[http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications\\_nsvrc\\_statement\\_sandusky-sentencing.pdf](http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_statement_sandusky-sentencing.pdf)

To download a Sample Policy Letter:

<http://www.atsa.com/sandusky-trial-sentencing>