

NATIONAL CENTER

on Domestic and Sexual Violence

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March 15, 2013

Honorable Sheldon Silver
Speaker of the Assembly
932 Legislative Office Building
Albany, N.Y. 12248

Re: Uphold Ban Against Professional Cage Fighting in New York

Dear Speaker Silver:

As advocates for survivors of domestic and sexual assault, we are writing to urge you to uphold the State of New York's ban against professional cage fighting and to resist efforts by the Las Vegas-based Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) to bring these violent spectacles to New York.

No state that aspires to be the "progressive capital of the nation," as Governor Cuomo asserted in his recent State of the State speech, should lower itself by embracing an industry dominated by a company that tolerates joking about sexual violence. Fighters in the UFC have joked about rape in public and one has appeared in videos that are demeaning to women and make fun of sexual violence.

Why, in a state that just enacted tough new legislation addressing the epidemic of domestic assault,¹ would we reverse course and expose our children to the violent misogyny and perverse forms of masculinity that are celebrated in the world of amateur and professional cage fighting?

Last year, UFC fighter Quinton "Rampage" Jackson appeared in an online video in which he makes light of sexual assault by pretending to attempt to rape a woman in a parking garage using chloroform and zip ties.² Even after a coalition of women's groups, clergy and academics expressed outrage over Jackson's behavior, and called for his removal from a cage fighting event, the UFC allowed him to compete on national television.³

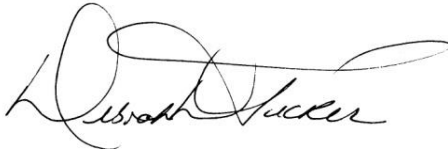
One prominent UFC fighter wrote on Twitter, "Rape is the new missionary,"⁴ while another UFC fighter wrote, "If a rape van was called a surprise van, more women wouldn't mind going for rides in them."⁵ UFC president Dana White has set a despicable example by repeatedly using abusive language that is derogatory to women."⁶ (See the attached document for incidents of socially irresponsible behavior by people associated with the UFC.)

Jokes about rape are never funny. Rape jokes are not funny to the 1.4 million women in New York who reported having been raped at some point in their lives; and they are not funny to the 3.8 million New York women who reported experiencing sexual violence victimization other than rape during their lifetimes.⁷

We strongly encourage you to maintain the ban against professional cage fighting events in New York.

(See List of Supporters on the following page)

Respectfully submitted, and on behalf of the following supporters,



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Executive Director

National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence (NCDSV)



Connie Neal

Executive Director

New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV)



Joanne Zannoni

Executive Director

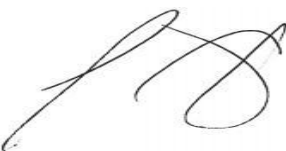
New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault



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¹ Press Release, "Governor Cuomo Signs Legislation Strengthening New York's Domestic Violence Laws," Oct. 25, 2012, <http://www.governor.ny.gov/press/102512domesticviolencelegislation>

² "Rampage Jackson — How to Pick Up a Gurl — Fast," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfG5amLtWEQ>

³ Hirst, Ellen Jean, "Video sparks protest of Ultimate Fighting event," Jan. 25, 2013, *Chicago Tribune*, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-01-25/news/ct-met-ufc-rape-video-20130125_1_ufc-fighter-lorenzo-fertitta-quinton-rampage-jackson; NBC 5 Chicago, "Groups Want UFC Star Booted for Racy Videos," Jan. 26, 2013, <http://www.nbcchicago.com/news/sports/ufc-chicago-quinton-rampage-jackson-rape-video-188462661.html>; Hill, Darlene, "Women's groups protest UFC's Quinton 'Rampage' Jackson," Jan. 25, 2013, *FOX 32 Chicago*, <http://www.myfoxchicago.com/story/20711189/womens-groups-protest-quinton-rampage-jackson>

⁴ Associated Press, "Group Criticizes UFC After Fighter's Rape Tweet," Nov. 12, 2012, CBS-Las Vegas, <http://lasvegas.cbslocal.com/2011/11/12/group-criticizes-ufc-after-fighters-rape-tweet/>

⁵ McNeil, Franklin, "UFC fires Miguel Torres for tweet," Dec. 9, 2011, *ESPN.com*, http://espn.go.com/mma/story/_/id/7334939/ufc-releases-miguel-torres-rape-van-twitter-post

⁶ Video (1:55 to 2:00), "UFC President Dana White's Notorious Rant," April 3, 2009, <http://www.blinkx.com/watch-video/ufc-president-dana-white-notorious-rant/FYZcYppmYJ5wwYruuKpvpw>; YouTube video (3:51 to 4:06), <http://www.youtube.com/embed/0Q8BeT77tVQ>

⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Summary Report," November 2011, http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/NISVS_Report2010-a.pdf