

The Northwest Network

of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian & Gay Survivors of Abuse

Statement from the NW Network

April 7th, 2017

Every day, young people face sexual abuse and exploitation in Seattle. Racism, homophobia, and transphobia create conditions that put our city's youth at daily risk of harm. As a result, LGBTQ young people and young people of color are wildly overrepresented among homeless youth and youth in the criminal legal system.

The NW Network has been supporting LGBTQ survivors of abuse for thirty years. Over that time, we have worked with youth and adults whose experiences of sexual assault, rape, and domestic violence have been made so much more difficult because of the stigma of homophobia and transphobia and the lack of civil protections. It further harms survivors when experiences of violence are used to advance stereotypes or attack our communities.

Today, as every day, we are determined to end the conditions that allow abuse and exploitation to happen, and to make sure that people in our community are able to respond when it does.

Today, every adult of good will in Seattle can resolve to look out for the children and youth in their neighborhood, in their congregation, in their school. To make sure the kids they know can tell them if they are worried or afraid or losing ground. Adults can let kids know that having a crush on another girl or wanting to wear a skirt instead of a suit will not change your resolve to be there for them. That you will fight like hell to change the conditions that allow sexual abuse and exploitation to happen, and will make sure that there are supports in place when it does.

Today, we want survivors to know that selling sex, or being arrested, or using drugs does not make it okay for anyone to rape or exploit you. We want survivors to know that they can reach out to us and other organizations in this city for help no matter who hurt them or when it happened. That we have been there and survived and are here to help.

Today is a hard day for this city. As we move forward, Seattle must neither minimize rape survivors' experiences nor advance hateful political agendas that put all survivors at risk.

The NW Network is here for survivors and our community today, as we were yesterday, as we will be tomorrow.

Connie Burk,
Executive Director
[NW Network.org](http://NWNetwork.org)