



# EMPOWERMENT

THE NEWSLETTER OF FEAR 2 FREEDOM

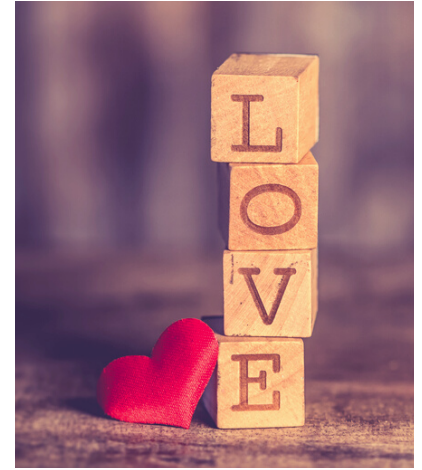
FEBRUARY 2024

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

There's a great deal of love flowing through February with Valentine's Day falling smack in the middle of the month. Here at Fear 2 Freedom we recognize there are different types of love - not just romantic love - as we take the opportunity this month to highlight love for our donors (sponsors, grantors, supporters, partners, volunteers). Without your support, we can't do what we do!

We also appreciate the enduring kind of love that helps survivors of sexual violence through tough parts of the healing journey. During this month of love as we seek to support survivors in our lives, or continue our own healing journeys, let the gentle voice of love in: I am enough. I am valuable. I am worthy of love.

I've also been amazed at times to hear the special way Freedom Bear supports survivors. This story came to us from Alyssa, a survivor who received Freedom Bear in her F2F Kit. (shared with her permission)



**"When I was 13, I was raped...I remember being scared, feeling unheard by the detective that made excuses for my abuser. The only person who truly believed me was the forensic gynecologist who did my exam. She gave me the Fear 2 Freedom box in 2016 & it changed my life.**

**I haven't dissolved all of my notes in my bear, but I have made progress. My bear was my only witness for many years as abuse continued, but I always had him to love & to hold. When things got really bad I would read my book that came with him, & remind myself that there was an after to all of this. That I wouldn't feel this way forever. Now I am 20, & I am in a loving relationship with the best partner I could ask for. I've devoted my life to helping others, & I became an EMT to pursue this.**

**The day that I dissolve the final note will be the day I am truly free, & I know it will take time, but it will happen. Fear 2 Freedom changed my entire perspective when I thought no one cared about me." - Alyssa, a Survivor**

During this month of donor love, we are grateful to all of you for helping us help survivors like Alyssa!

*"Freedom Bear helps those wounded identify and process the 'terrible thing they are trying to forget & begin the healing process." - Rosemary Tribble*

*Virginia Woodward*

# BLACK SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

## Understanding The Context

Although sexual violence is an issue that affects all communities, its impacts are not felt in the same exact way by each. Members of the Black community experience higher rates of sexual violence while also facing an array of barriers on their journeys towards healing & justice, due to an array of historical & structural issues. Here are just a few supporting stats:

- 35% of Black women experience contact sexual violence in their lifetime
- 38% of Black women experience sexual violence other than rape in their lifetime
- 40% of confirmed sex trafficking survivors in the U.S. are Black
- Half of all Black transgender women are survivors of sexual violence

Given the impact of historical trauma, racism, & oppression, many Black survivors do not come forward about their experiences. In fact, for every 1 Black woman who reports their rape, at least 15 do not. The choice not to speak out is not uncommon among survivors of any demographic & can stem from feelings such as shame, humiliation, fear of retaliation, fear of not being believed, among others. Seeing how the predominant culture in our society treats survivors of sexual violence the low report rate is unsurprising, but for Black survivors there are additional pressures that can influence the choice to remain silent:



- The portrayal of Black people as hyper-sexual, fostering biased beliefs that Black survivors were “willing participants” or “deserved it”
- Black children being seen as less innocent & more adult-like than their peers, leading to people believing they “should’ve known better” or were “asking for it”
- The stereotype of the “strong Black woman”, meaning they’re less likely to be seen as victims who are deserving of care & protection
- Desires to shield Black community members from unjust harm stemming from a long history of excessive use of force & over-policing
- Fear of being unjustly accused of being a perpetrator of a crime
- The historical undervaluing & minimization of Black people’s voices & lives

When you start to look at the full picture, deciding whether or not to come forward is not a simple choice. Aside from this, the impacts of trauma can bring another level of challenge. Trauma is associated with PTSD, depression, substance misuse, & other adverse effects for survivors of any identity. However, when these are layered with the experiences of racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. of Black survivors, their impacts can be heightened. The way this trauma is presenting for someone can lead to interactions with law enforcement, which for Black survivors means they’re more likely to be criminalized than to receive the care & support they need.

## What Can We Do?

As Audre Lorde put it, “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.”. Recognizing the complexity of the factors behind survivors experiences & choices, can help us reserve judgement & show more compassion to ALL survivors. Here are a few ways you can help create change:

- Continue to expand your understanding of how gender identity, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, & more overlap with sexual violence
- Listen to & believe Black voices & be there for Black survivors in the ways they want to be supported
- Advocate for policies & services that are inclusive of & culturally specific for Black survivors

For survivors in the Black community who are uncertain about reporting but want to explore their options, you can call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-4673 to speak with a trained advocate & get connected to local resources. For a list of culturally-specific resources, click the link below. Remember, your voice matters & you deserve healing.

Sources:  
Corbett, H. (2021, February 27). A social justice movement focused on black survivors of sexual violence. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/hollycorbett/2021/02/27/a-social-justice-movement-focused-on-black-survivors-of-sexual-violence/?sh=350ff28a4631>  
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NBWJI. (2023, April 12). Black women, sexual assault, and criminalization. NBWJI.org. <https://www.nbwji.org/post/black-women-sexual-assault-criminalization>  
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# EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

## William & Mary

So much goes into planning an Hour 2 Empower event to educate students. With amazing hosts, like William & Mary's athletics department, who were willing to talk about difficult subjects, we know that positive change is taking place.

Kicking off the New Year strong, 55 student athletes turned out to learn how they can become better support people for survivors & pack 100 F2F Kits for survivors in their area. We were truly impressed with how engaged & thoughtful each of these students were.

Because of the thoughtful service these student athletes put in, our community partners each received 50 of our F2F Kits which will support their essential work. Avalon Center provides essential services & shelter to those experiencing domestic violence. Latisha's House empowers the community through their long-term transitional housing for survivors of sex trafficking.



## Red Sands Installation

F2F joined Newport News Commissioner of the Revenue Tiffany Boyle for "Operational Breakthrough" - the installation of the Red Sands Project hosted by Christopher Newport University. Local elected officials, community partners, NNPD representatives, human trafficking organizations, CNU faculty & students turned out to pour red sand into pavement cracks, raising awareness of the individuals who have slipped through the cracks of human trafficking.



## Governor's Mansion Tree

The First Lady of Virginia, Suzanne Youngkin, honored F2F by highlighting Freedom Bear on one of the holiday trees in the Executive Mansion. At a holiday reception given to highlight the work of 10 nonprofits in the Commonwealth, F2F Founder Rosemary Tribble shared about Freedom Bear with those gathered there. F2F is truly grateful for this incredible honor!





## COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

In a meeting with 2 F2F partners who utilize our F2F Kits, Xiomara Harris (ED of The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors) shared, "One of our survivors said the most memorable thing that happened when she had the PERK exam at Riverside was receiving the F2F Kit. Now she keeps Freedom Bear in a special place in her house." Lisa Kersey (ED of Freekind) chimed in, "One of our human trafficking survivors calls Freedom Bear her 'Sobriety Bear' who helps keep her sober!"

# SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

## Newport News Shipbuilding

F2F is grateful to Newport News Shipbuilding for their generous grant that sponsored our November H2E at Radford University. Over 100 students, athletes, & community partners came out to learn how to better support survivors & packed 160 AfterCare Kits for the Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley. We were impressed with how intentionally Radford students packed their Kits & wrote their notes.

## Coastal Fermentory

We shout out our thanks to Coastal Fermentory for their 'Drink Beer & Do Good' evening last fall showcasing F2F. We appreciate the commitment from Seth & Sarah & the whole Coastal team who give up their tips & more to support our programs.

## Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation

F2F is honored that the Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation saw value in our mission by awarding us a grant in December that will fund sexual violence prevention programs & 300 F2F Kits for survivors.

## Langley for Families Foundation

F2F shouts out our thanks to the Langley for Families Foundation for their grant supporting H2E programs in Hampton Roads. Their grant sponsored 100 F2F Kits packed by students at Norfolk State University, plus 100 Kits packed by Old Dominion University students. These Kits will support survivors through the VBPD, LGBT Life Center, YWCA-SHR/Family Justice Center, & the H.E.R. Shelter. This grant also went towards William & Mary Athletics' H2E where athletes packed 100 F2F Kits for the Avalon Center & Latisha's House.

## CNU Alumni of the Peninsula

Last fall CNU's Peninsula Alumni Board hosted the Captain's Classic Golf Tournament, renamed this year in honor of Muriel Millar, F2F's former COO & longtime supporter. The Peninsula Alumni Board chose F2F as a primary non-profit beneficiary & had costumed Freedom Bear on the course! Thank you CNU Alumni for the generous \$1,500 contribution!



## WELCOME SPRING INTERNS!

Tracy is a senior at Christopher Newport University studying Criminology & Communications with minors in Leadership Studies as well as Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies. She has returned to F2F for a second internship semester.



Julianna



Tracy & Linda



Karli

Linda is a senior at William & Mary majoring in Government with a minor in Gender Studies. Linda's internship will give her the experience she desires in understanding the inner workings of a women's-oriented nonprofit.

Julianna is a junior at Old Dominion University majoring in Strategic Communication with a minor in Marketing. Her internship at F2F will help her gain experience in research & marketing skills.

Karli is a Christopher Newport University senior pursuing a degree in Criminology & Sociology with a minor in Psychology. She feels her internship will help her grow in communications while giving back to the community.

# SAVE THE DATE

## Lived Through This Play

WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY | FEB 14-15, 2024 | 5:30PM

Join F2F's partner, Freekind, for an impactful performance on 02/14 at 5:30 at the Wells Theatre in Norfolk, given again in the Richmond area on 2/15 at the Perkinson Center in Chester, VA.

## Champions Luncheon

WEDNESDAY | APR 10, 2024 | 11:30 AM

F2F will be hosting our second annual Champions Luncheon in Northern Virginia at the Westwood Country Club in Vienna, VA. Come join us for a luncheon focusing on the inspirational journey from fear to freedom – where restored joy is possible. Attendees will also have the opportunity to pack F2F AfterCare & iCare Kits.

## Give Local 757

TUESDAY | APR 23, 2024 | ALL DAY

Mark your calendars for Give Local 757 Day. Our SV prevention programs impact students at local colleges & universities while hundreds of our F2F Kits support survivors at hospitals, domestic violence shelters, women's resource centers in the 757 region. Show your continued support by making a donation!

## Walk In Their Shoes

SATURDAY | APR 27, 2024 | 9:00 AM

Support The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors at their annual fundraiser walk. Wear shoes that represent the survivor(s) you're marching for & join us at the Peninsula Town Center in Hampton, VA.



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