

MIAMI INCLUSION ALLIANCE

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**April is Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month** and every year there is a theme chosen. This year's theme is "I Ask," which sends the message that *asking* for consent is a normal and necessary part of interactions. This year's theme endeavors to make consent a proud and permanent part of our conversation around abuse. There has been so much discussion around sexual assault, consent, and rape this past year, it is hard to keep track of where we have been and where we are, so I thought it might be helpful to look back on some interesting facts and dates.

Rape used to be a property crime against a virgin's father or husband. It wasn't until the 11th and 12th centuries that rape was seen as a violent crime against a victim.

1861 was the first year a black woman could legally claim rape against a white man...six years after slavery was abolished.

Take Back the Night events were the first organized response to sexual assault and violence against women, and they started in 1976.

It wasn't until 1993, with North Carolina criminalizing marital rape, that a husband sexually assaulting his wife became a crime in all 50 states. The prevailing notion behind allowing a man to rape his wife was that she consented to a lifetime of sexual intercourse through her vows.

Teal became the color of Sexual Assault Awareness Month in 2000 after a vote was held among various sexual violence coalitions from across the United States.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month had its beginnings in 2001, when the National Sexual Violence Resource Center coordinated the first formally recognized Sexual Assault Awareness Month campaign. It wasn't until 2009, however, when President Barak Obama made the first official proclamation that April was Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

There have been many positives. The late 20<sup>st</sup> century definition of rape has been undergoing changes. Rape was only a violent act with a male's penis in a woman's vagina. Now the general category of sexual assault also includes restraint, threat, oral penetration, anal penetration, same sex victims and perpetrators, and female on male sexual assault.

"Consent" has evolved, taking into consideration factors such as age, duress, mental disability, and substance intoxication.

There is still is no national law against sexual assault in the United States but each state has laws with respect to rape and sexual assault crimes.

There is still much to work to be done on this important issue, I would love to hear your thoughts. [sharon@justdigit.org](mailto:sharon@justdigit.org)