



*Jeans painted in solidarity, from NCEDSV 2023
Denim Day event*

Denim Day: Stretching the Fabric of Solidarity Across the World

Denim Day has been celebrated amongst advocates for decades. The movement was sparked in 1992, in Rome, Italy, when an 18-year-old girl was raped by her driving instructor. The perpetrator was initially convicted and sentenced, but justice was denied when he filed an appeal. The case made its way to the Italian High Court, which overturned the verdict. Their reasoning? They believed the victim's jeans to be too tight for the perpetrator to take them off alone, so they assumed she must have helped take them off, thus, implying consent.

Women in the Italian Parliament were outraged and protested by wearing jeans, sparking a movement that would transcend borders.

This pivotal protest sparked support across the world. In 1999, Patti Occhiuzzo Giggans, Executive Director of Peace Over Violence, proposed a global protest against victim-blaming and the misconceptions surrounding sexual violence. Thus, Denim Day emerged from Los Angeles as an annual-campaign, encouraging people all over the world to wear jeans to take a stand against rape culture.

Denim Day has since evolved into an international symbol of solidarity. The involvement of fashion brand GUESS and the GUESS Foundation as the Official Fashion Sponsor in 2014 marked a critical point in amplifying the campaign's reach. The movement's mission was further propelled as renowned musicians and activists like Aloe Blacc and Maya Jupiter vocalized their support by infusing music and arts into the campaign.

In 2015, Denim Day came full circle in Italy with the launch of Denim Day Europe. From there, Denim Day reached and was established in over 100 countries worldwide. The movement made its way through college campuses such as USC where the first official campus activation was hosted, further engaging young minds in the fight against sexual violence.

As the world became more technologically involved, so did the Denim Day movement. In 2014, hashtags like #YesAllWomen and #WhatWereYouWearing highlighted the prevalence of rape culture. In 2017, the #MeToo movement further propelled awareness, demonstrating the power of online activism and solidarity in combating systemic issues.



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Solidarity can go a long way in the healing journey for victim-survivors. NCEDSV Technical Assistance Coordinator, Lorelee Rae, reflects on the progression of Denim Day over her decades of work as an advocate, "Denim Day has been a critical tool to spread community awareness, create legislation regarding sexual assault, enhance services for victim-survivors and has created an opportunity for discussion. Denim Day supports victim-survivors through the effort that is shown throughout their community, by supporters wearing Denim in their honor."

This year, Denim Day falls on April 24, 2024. Let us remember its roots and the bravery of those individuals who fought against the status quo to speak up for what is right. As advocates, we must continue the work of challenging harmful narratives and strive for a world free from victim-blaming. While Denim Day is a powerful movement, uniting communities worldwide in the fight against injustice, there is still work to be done. Rape culture is still all too prevalent in our society. It is up to us to continue the fight. Wear your denim with pride, as it symbolizes the fabric of commitment to justice and empowerment for all.

Naomi Thompson
Communications Coordinator, NCEDSV

