

A RESOLUTION AFFIRMING SAVANNAH DSA'S COMMITMENT TO BELIEVING SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT IN HONOR OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

Submitted by Kendra Clark

WHEREAS, Sexual Assault Awareness Month is observed annually to raise public awareness about sexual violence and educate communities on how to prevent it; and

WHEREAS, the prevalence of sexual assault in the United States remains a crisis, with data from the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) indicating that an American is sexually assaulted approximately once every 68 seconds; and

WHEREAS, according to recent statistics, over 420,000 Americans aged 12 and older experience sexual assault or abuse each year, yet the vast majority of these crimes go unreported to law enforcement ; and

WHEREAS, statistics demonstrate that 81% of women and 43% of men have experienced sexual harassment or assault in their lifetimes, with marginalized communities, including Black, Indigenous, and LGBTQ+ individuals, experiencing even higher rates of violence ; and

WHEREAS, fewer than 25 out of every 1,000 sexual assaults result in a felony conviction, and survivors who report to law enforcement often face retraumatization, victim-blaming, invasive forensic exams, and low prosecution rates, demonstrating that "believing survivors" cannot be reduced to carceral solutions but must instead center community accountability, mental health support, and material resources; and

WHEREAS, low-income women, women experiencing homelessness, and women in insecure housing are assaulted at rates up to 20 times higher than the general population, and economic dependence on an abuser is the single greatest predictor of a survivor remaining in an unsafe situation, directly linking sexual violence to demands for economic security, housing, and a living wage; and

WHEREAS, the movement for socialist and labor rights must be a movement free from coercion and violence, yet history requires us to confront uncomfortable truths about the leaders we revere; and

WHEREAS, the recent release of the "Epstein Files" and ongoing litigation have forced the nation to come to terms with how wealthy and powerful networks operated with impunity, exploiting young people while receiving protection from financial and political institutions ; and

WHEREAS, the legacy of the labor movement has been profoundly challenged by the March 2026 New York Times investigation and subsequent reporting detailing sexual misconduct by famed United Farm Workers (UFW) co-founder Cesar Chavez, including a public statement from civil rights icon Dolores Huerta alleging that Chavez sexually assaulted her on multiple

occasions in the 1960s, resulting in two pregnancies that she concealed to protect the movement ; and

WHEREAS, Huerta's statement that she "carried this secret for as long as I did because building the movement and securing farm worker rights was life's work" highlights the systemic pressure within even progressive organizations to prioritize institutional reputation over the safety and dignity of individual survivors ; and

WHEREAS, DSA nationally has expelled multiple members for sexual harassment and assault, including high-profile cases in the New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles chapters, demonstrating that even avowedly feminist socialist organizations remain vulnerable to replicating patriarchal power dynamics unless they maintain active, survivor-led accountability processes; and

WHEREAS, the fundamental socialist principle of bodily autonomy demands that we reject the idea that the ends justify the means when it comes to sexual violence, and that we commit to building organizations that do not require survivors to suffer in silence for the sake of a "greater good."

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SAVANNAH CHAPTER OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA:

Section 1: Statement of Belief and Support

Savannah DSA affirms that we stand with and, consistent with trauma-informed best practices, believe survivors of sexual assault. We recognize that false reporting of sexual assault is statistically rare, and that the primary barrier to justice is not false accusations but systemic underreporting and institutional failures to investigate. We further affirm that believing survivors does not require endorsement of the criminal legal system, but rather a commitment to providing material support, mental health resources, and non-carceral accountability options.

Section 2: Economic Justice as Survivor Support

Recognizing that economic dependence on an abuser is a primary driver of ongoing harm, Savannah DSA commits to advocating for policies that reduce survivors' vulnerability, including guaranteed housing, a living wage, paid leave for survivors seeking medical care or relocation, and accessible childcare.

Section 3: Internal Accountability

Savannah DSA commits to reviewing our internal grievance procedures to ensure they are survivor-centered, accessible, and free from retaliation. We will provide annual training for steering committee members and volunteer leadership on preventing harassment and supporting survivors within the chapter, drawing from models developed by DSA chapters that have successfully implemented survivor-led accountability processes.

Section 4: Solidarity with Survivors in the Labor Movement

In light of the allegations regarding Cesar Chavez and the UFW, Savannah DSA expresses solidarity with Dolores Huerta and the other survivors who came forward. We affirm that the struggle for workers' rights cannot be separated from the struggle against gender-based violence. We support efforts to rename public holidays and monuments that currently honor Chavez, as proposed by the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, to instead honor the thousands of women and workers whose struggles built the farmworker movement .

Section 5: Political Education

Savannah DSA will host or promote at least one educational event a year addressing the intersection of economic justice and sexual violence, including a discussion of the Epstein case's revelations about how capitalist wealth shields abusers, the Chavez case's lessons about power dynamics within social movements, and the limitations of carceral approaches to sexual violence.

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