



McCluskey Center for
VIOLENCE PREVENTION

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH



Power-Conscious Approaches to Addressing **Sexual Violence** Among College Students

Chris Linder, PhD

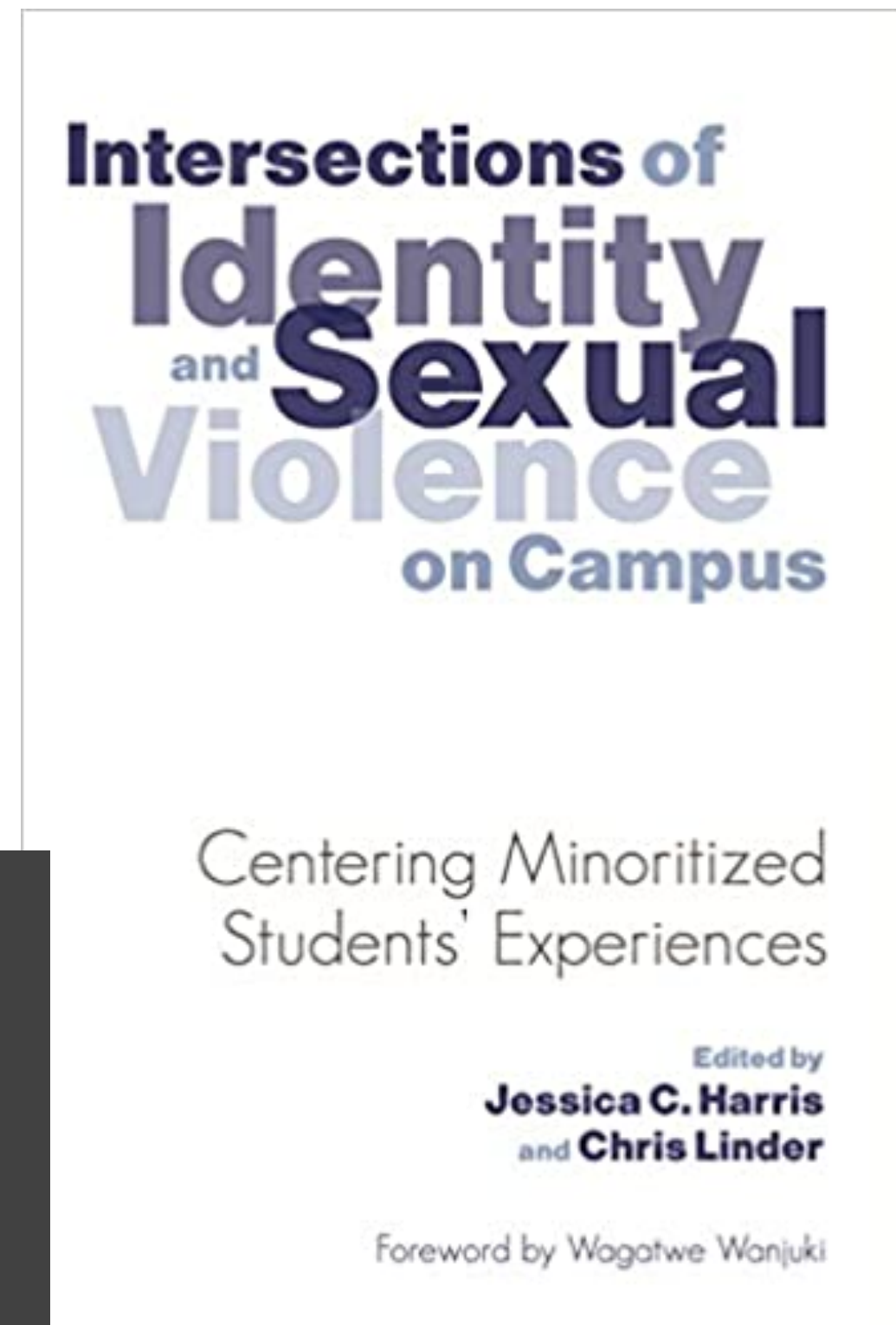
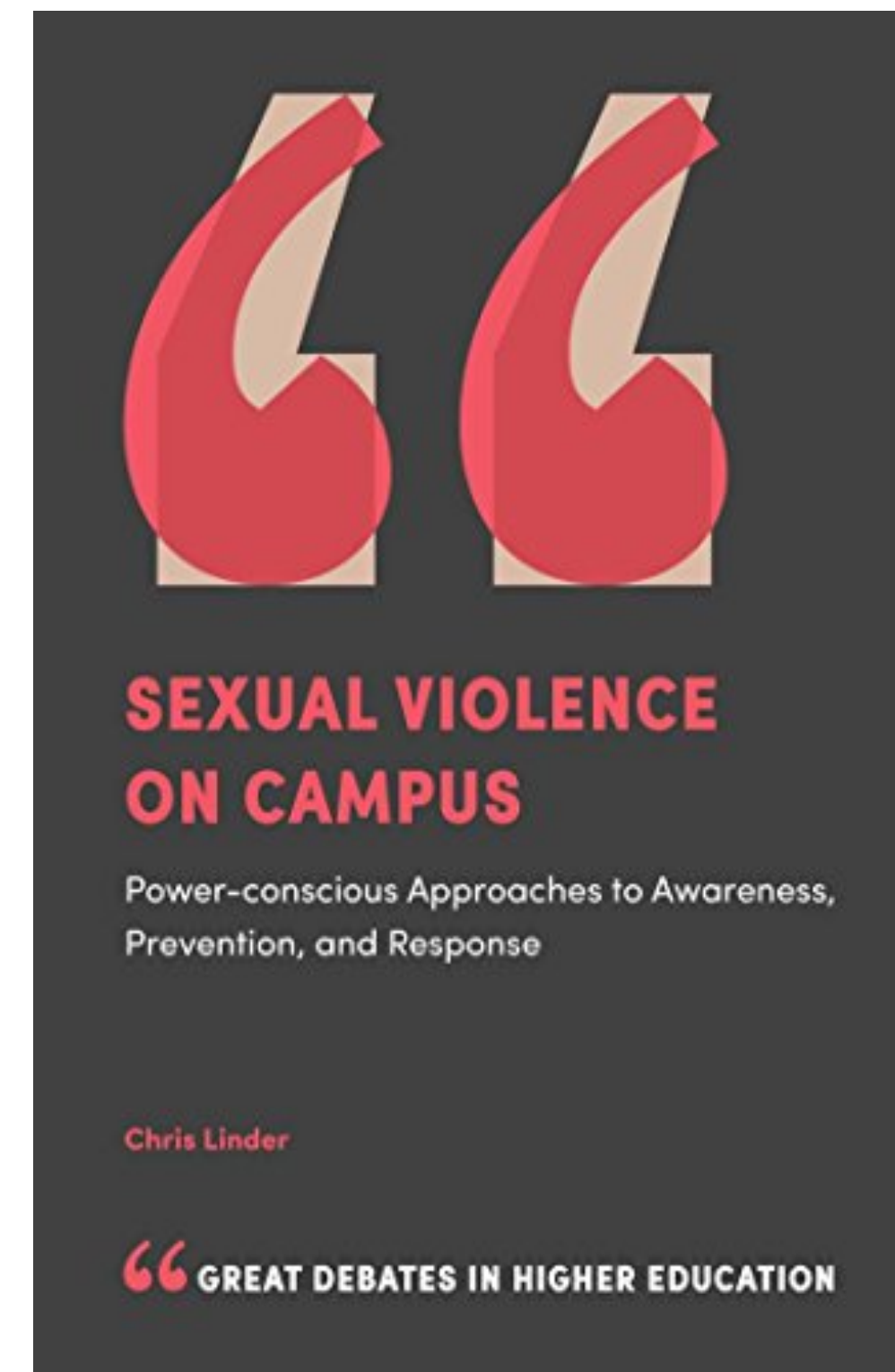
Associate Professor, Educational
Leadership & Policy

Land & Labor Acknowledgement

It is important to note that our work takes place on **land that European colonizers stole from Indigenous people through violence, including sexual violence.** Specifically, the Bannock, Goshute, Navajo, Paiute, Shoshone, and Ute peoples lived, and still live, in the land that is now considered Utah; the Seminole, Timucua, Miccosukee, Mascogo people lived and still live in the area now considered Florida. Further, enslaved people provided exploited labor on which institutions of higher education were built. Acknowledging the land and labor exploitation is vital to engaging in social justice and equity work. As we move forward in our collective work, I implore us to **remember our responsibility** to those who were here before us to **honor their legacies** and **call attention to and interrupt exploitation** as often as possible through our work.

Foundations & Assumptions

- Perspective informed by **identities** and **experiences**: Queer, white, nondisabled, cisgender woman from a working class background, secondary survivor of IPV
- **Sexual violence** is an **equity** and **justice** issue, tightly wound with all forms of **oppression**
- Teaching people **how “not to get harmed”** is problematic *and* ineffective
- People who cause harm **can change**
- Punitive systems **will not heal us**, bring (most) survivors justice, nor change people engaging harmful behavior



Rates of sexual violence have not changed on college campuses since **1957**.

Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004; Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957



Why?

1. Hyper-focus on response
2. Ahistorical understanding of oppression
3. Limited response to perpetration

Hyper-focus on Response

What are the **primary laws** that guide our work?

Campus Policy - codes of conduct, campus policy and procedures, campus interpretation of state and federal policy

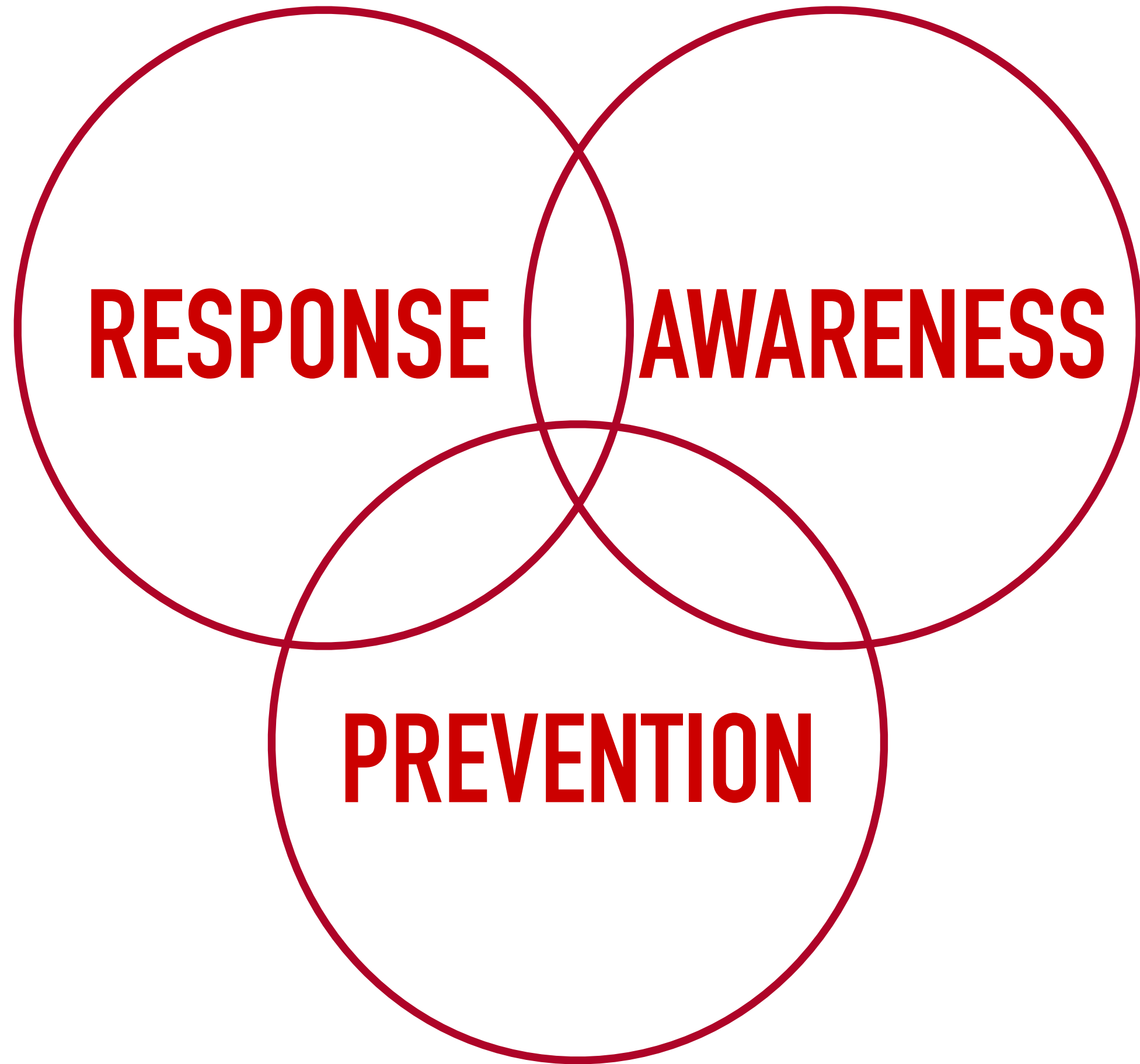
State Policy - codified bystander intervention requirements, definitions of consent, etc.

Federal Policy - Campus SaVE, Clery, Title IX, VAWA



Jeanne Clery

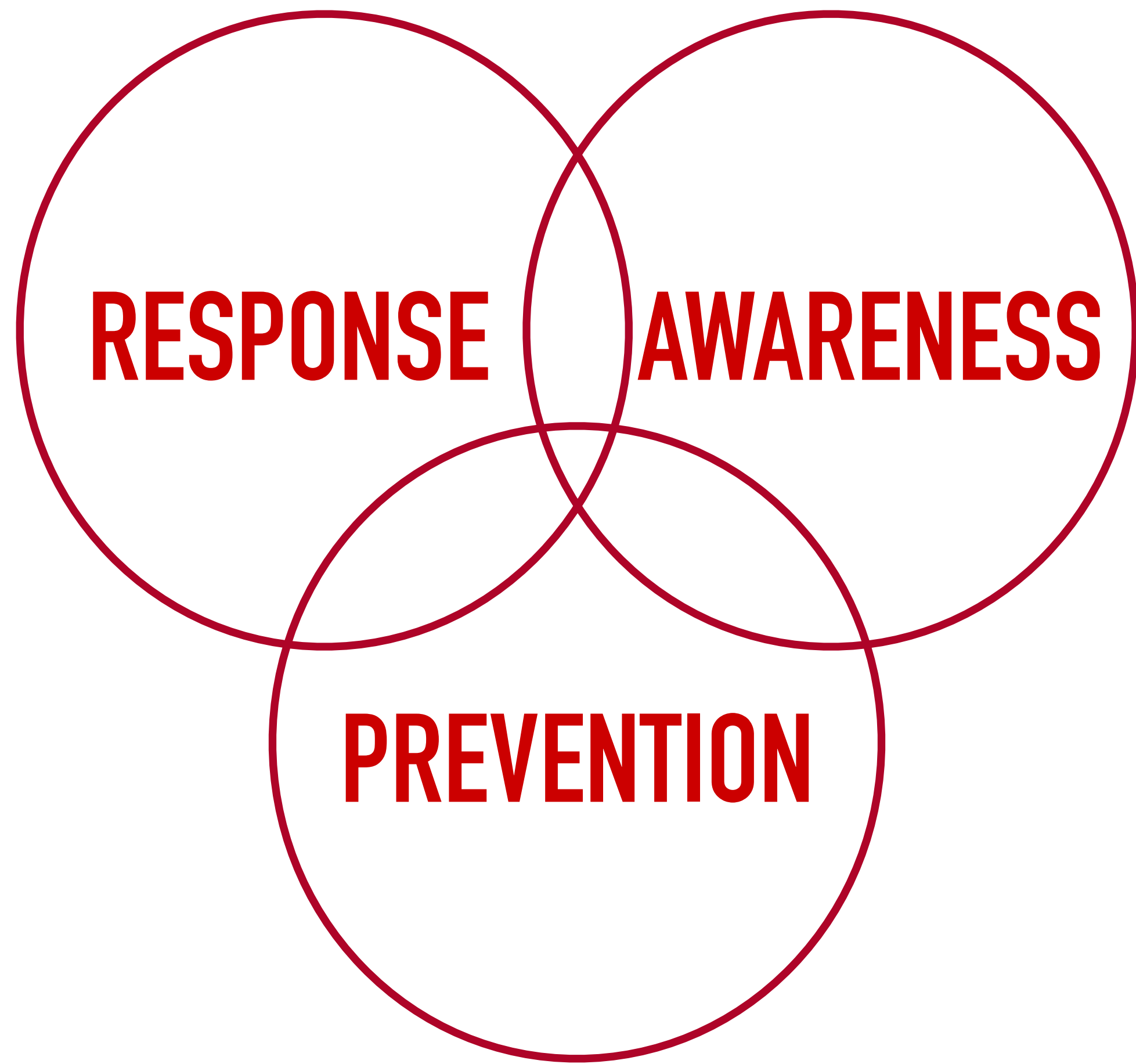
Response, Awareness & Prevention



“Title IX strongly incentivizes the post-assault focus. Colleges may want to reduce the overall rate of sexual assault, **but they risk liability under Title IX primarily for a bad response to an assault that has already occurred**, rather than for ineffective efforts to reduce the overall rate of assault.”

– Silbaugh, 2015, p. 1052

Response, Awareness & Prevention



The preventative education component...is in fact **largely reactive**: the programs assume that sexual assault will be attempted or will occur and put the onus on potential victims and bystanders to prevent it...schools must teach students how to avoid risky situations, how to intervene if they see a suspect situation unfolding, and what to do in the aftermath of an assault. They are **not required**, however, to adopt programs that seek to **change cultural norms** and behaviors so that such reaction is unnecessary.

- Collins, 2016, p. 383

Ahistorical Understanding of Oppression

**Sexual violence is wound with all
forms of oppression.
Perpetrators target bisexual women,
trans people, Indigenous women,
and people with disabilities at even
higher rates than their peers.**

Cantor et al, 2020; Porter & McQuiller Williams, 2011

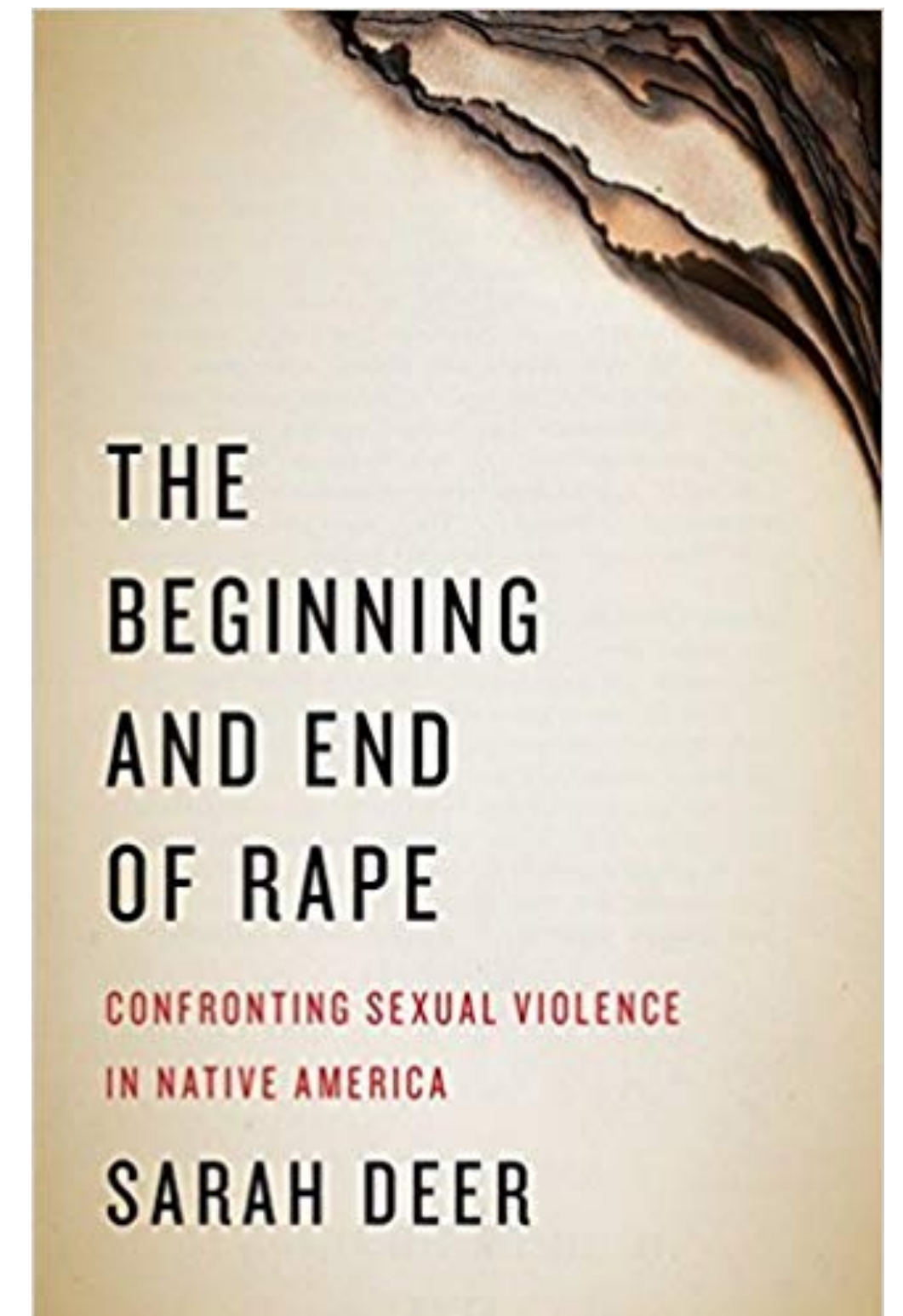
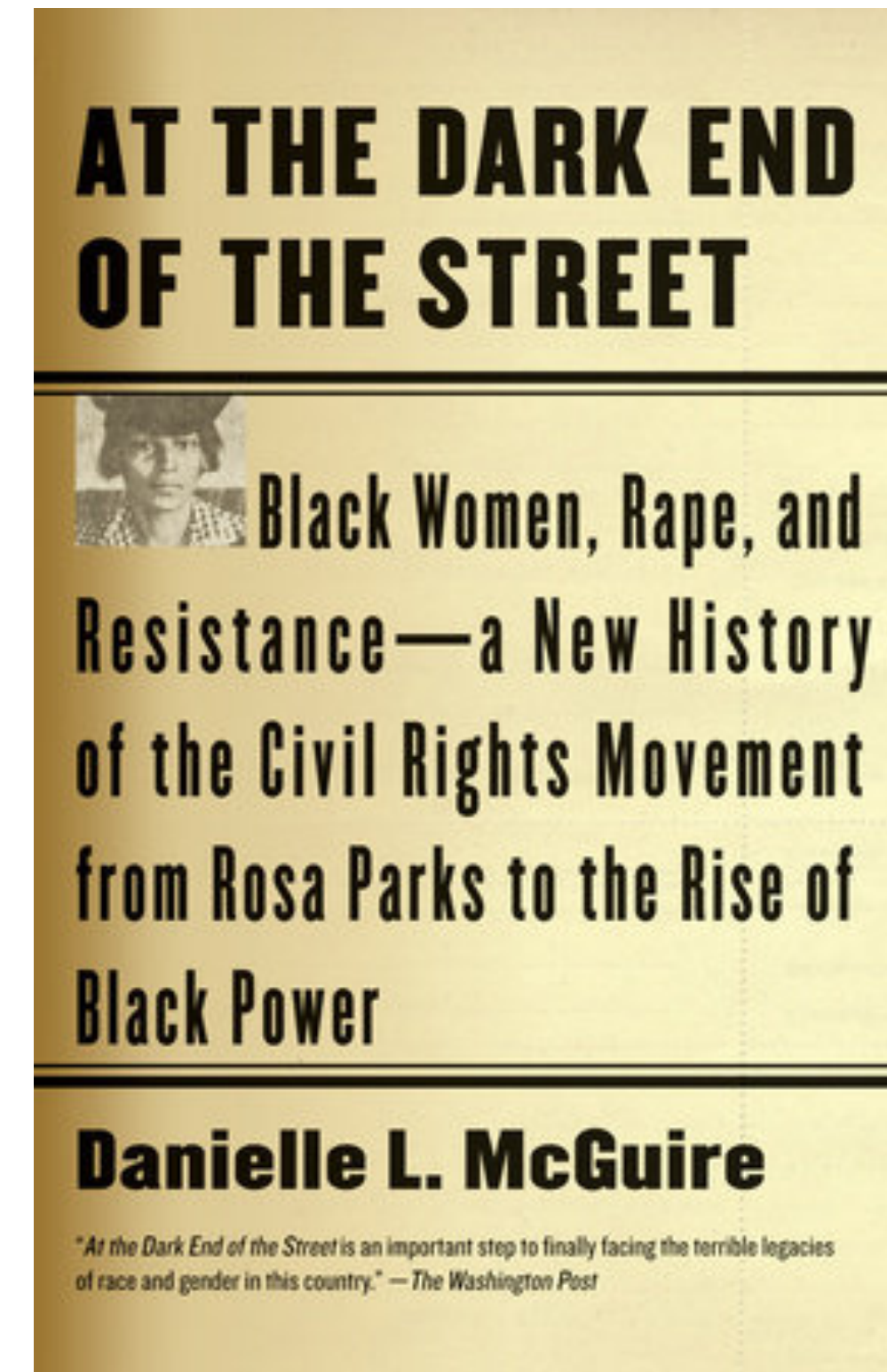
Ahistoricism Leads to Incomplete and Ineffective Practices

“Consciousness-raising groups of the 1970s laid the foundation for today’s anti-rape activism.”

- Most white feminist authors in the 1990s

Colonization & Slavery

Rape used as a tool of
terrorization and **economic**
control directed toward
Indigenous communities &
enslaved people



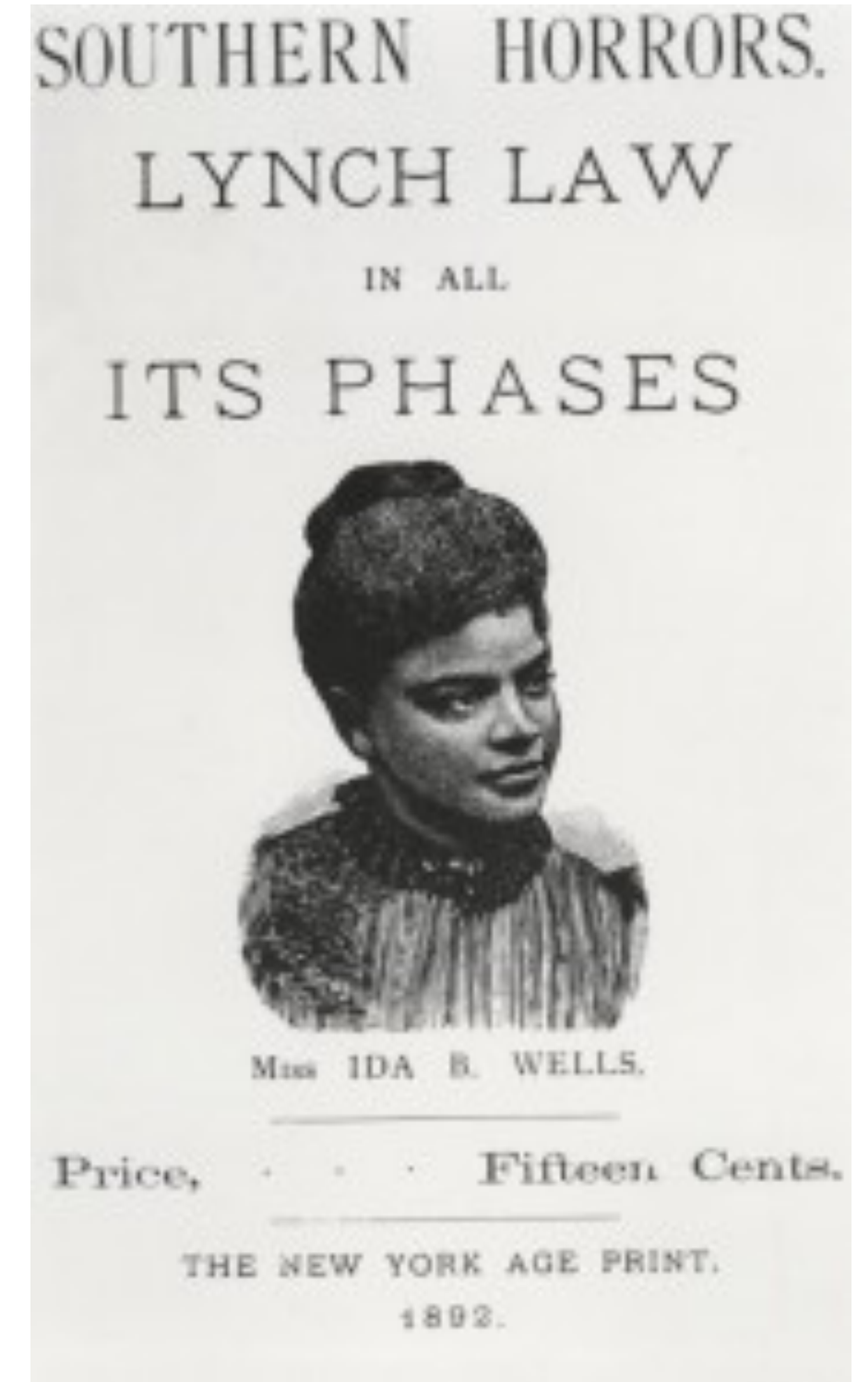
Victorian Era

- Rape laws centered morality & **purity of white women** and “better classes” (Giddings, 1984, p. 49)
- Rape laws emerged from **property laws** designed to protect wealthy, white fathers from economic loss



Civil War & Reconstruction

- White men used rape as a **tool of terrorization and control** as Black communities gained power
- Black men framed as rapists - **lynching** used as a guise to **“protect” white women**
- Resistance largely led by Black women included attention to sexual violence



Civil Rights Era

Continued **activism** raising awareness about **Black women's** experiences with rape and resisting assumptions of Black men as rapists



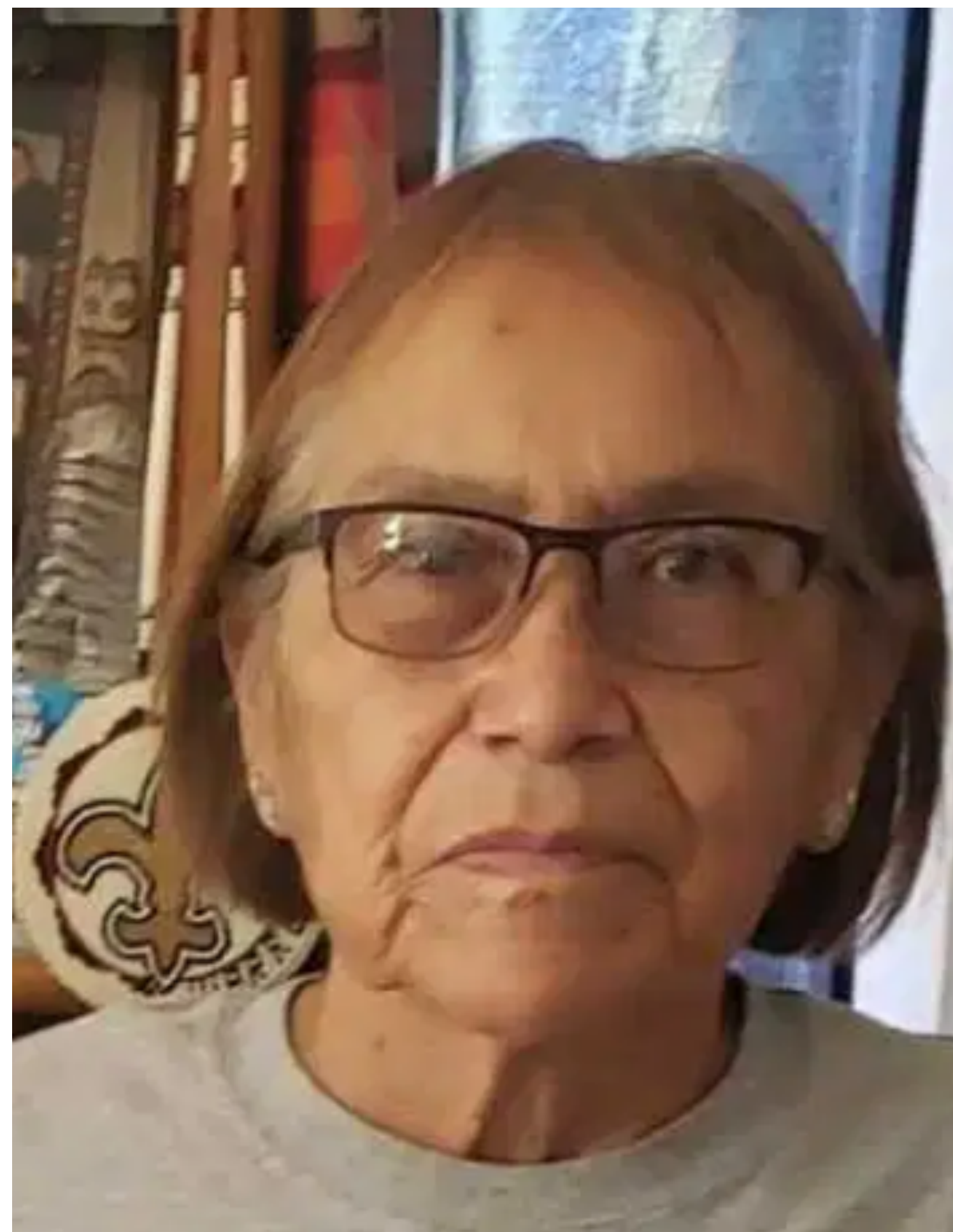
“Tough on Crime” Era



- Increased **criminalization** related to drug use in impoverished and communities of Color; continued representation of Black & Latino men as “criminals,” including as perpetrators of SV
- Passage of **VAWA 1994**

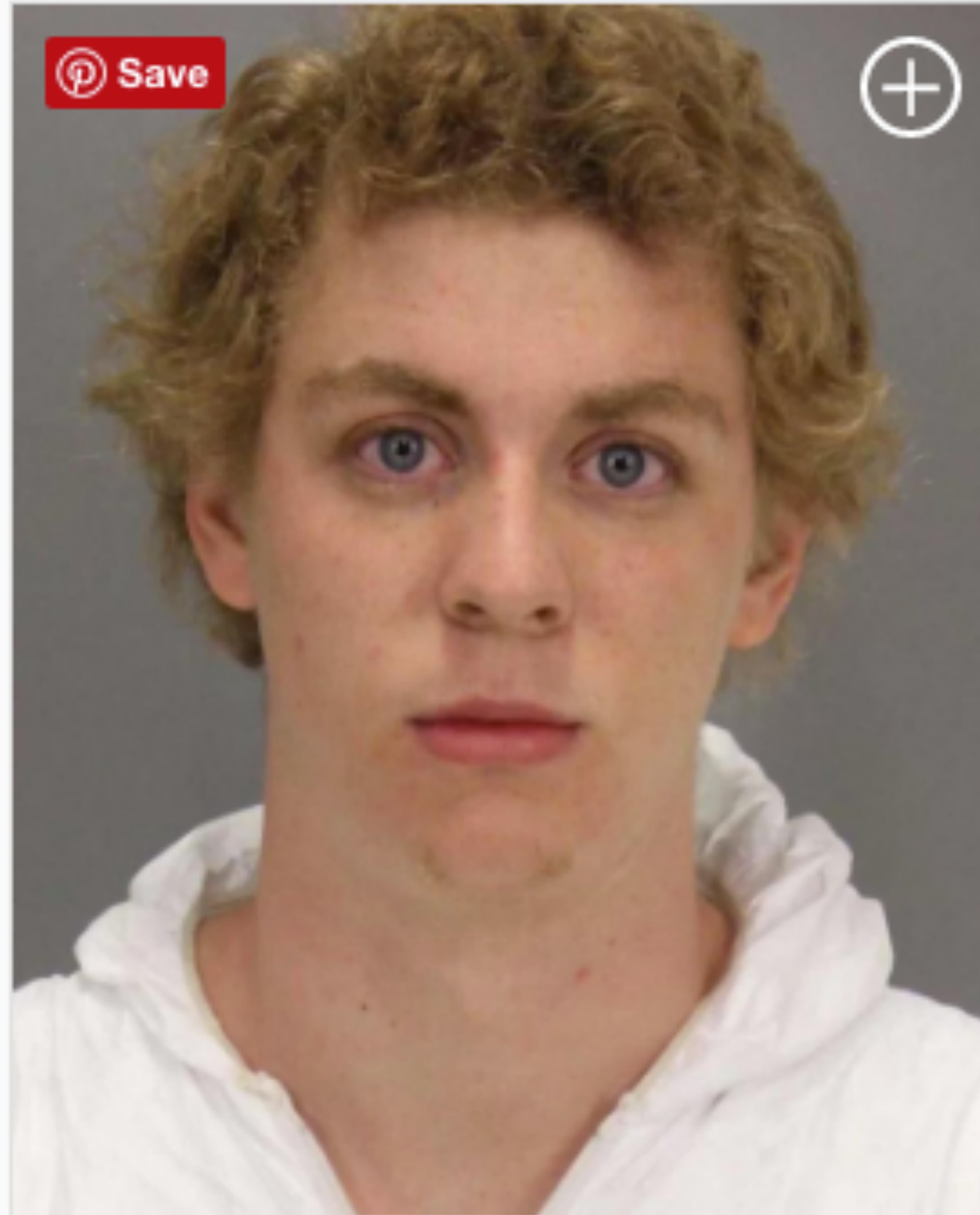
**Women of Color are
invisible as survivors/victims of
relationship & sexual violence
while men of Color are
hypervisible as perpetrators.**







(SAMUEL M. SIMPKINS/AP)



(STANFORD UNIVERSITY'S DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY)

Limited Understanding of and Responses to **Perpetration**



Content Analysis Study

Study Parameters:

- Published 2006-2016
- 12 Databases
- Topic: Campus Sexual Assault
- Limited to U.S.-based studies

= **454 Empirical
Research Articles**

Subject	#	%
Victim Risk Factors	123	27
Alcohol/Drugs & SV	70	15.4
Post-Assault Victim Impact	54	11.9
Bystander Intervention	51	11.2
Education/Awareness Programs	48	10.6
Perpetrator Risk Factors	47	10.4
Rape Culture	47	10.4
Perceptions of Rape/SA	45	9.9

REDUCE THE RISK OF BECOMING A SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIM

Avoid hazardous situations.

Sexual assault can occur in any situation and is never your fault regardless of the circumstances. However, by taking such steps as traveling accompanied and avoiding alcohol and drugs, You can substantially reduce your risks for being victimized.

Communicate your limits clearly.

If someone starts to offend you or cross a line that you have set for yourself, tell them firmly and early. Polite approaches may be misunderstood or ignored. If the person does not respect your wishes, remove yourself from the situation immediately. Miscommunication can be explained later. Do not give someone the chance to violate your wishes or boundaries. This can often contribute to the guilt felt following unwanted sexual advances, but it does not make it your fault.

Be assertive.

Often passivity can be interpreted as permission — it is not. Be direct and firm with someone who is sexually pressuring you. Tell an acquaintance or your partner what you want — or don't want — and stick with your decision. Regardless, there must always be active consent on both sides. Consent to one thing does not imply another.

Trust your instincts.

If you feel you are being pressured into unwanted sex, you probably are. If you feel uncomfortable or threatened around an acquaintance or your partner, get out of the situations immediately. If you misread someone's signals, you can always explain later.

Respond physically.

Even clear communication is not always effective. Some people simply don't listen or don't care. If either person is intoxicated or high, it may also complicate the situation. However, it is not an excuse for someone to commit sexual assault. If someone is assaulting you and not responding to your objections, you have the right to respond physically or to physically defend yourself if you feel you can do so. If possible, push the person away, scream "No!" and say that you consider what the person is doing to be rape. It is understandable that most people instinctively do not respond forcefully to people they know. It is not your fault if you find that you are unable to do so.

REDUCE THE RISK OF BECOMING A SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIM

Without clear consent from both parties it is still sexual assault
and no one ever deserves to be raped or assaulted!

**Conflating harmful and
illegal behaviors.**

Examples of Harm

- Controlling/manipulating what a partner wears or eats or where they go or who they are friends with
- Sending unsolicited nudes or pressuring someone else to send nude photos
- Manipulating someone to have sex by intentionally ignoring cues or capitalizing on “miscommunication” to get what they want
- Ignoring people’s boundaries, even in small ways

Who is causing **harm**?

1 in 7 college men have committed acts that meet the legal definition of sexual assault.

- Thompson, Koss, Kingree, Goree & Rice, 2011

Who is causing **harm**?

- **Nice** people.
- **Cool** people.
- **Cute** people.
- **“Normal”** people.
- Hyper-masculine men **socialized not to have complex feelings.**
- People who **ignore boundaries** to get what they want.
- People who **use alcohol** to trick a person into getting what they want, or **making them more vulnerable.**
- People who **experienced violence** growing up.



Brock Turner

Abbey, Wegner, Pierce, & Jacques-Tiura, 2012;
Hudson-Fledge, Grover, Mece, Ramos, &
Thompson, 2018; Voller & Long, 2010

**“I don’t want them to get in
trouble;
I just want them to stop.”**

Now **what?**

- **Why does all of this matter?**
- **What's something you learned?**
- **What's something you're thinking about doing **differently** as a result of what you learned?**

Start from a place of what *can* we do, rather than what *must* we do?

Compliance
is a floor, not a ceiling.

**Explore (and support)
alternatives to criminal justice
systems and other traditional
accountability processes.**

View **intervening with people
who cause harm as a
survivor-centered approach.**

**Interrupt dominant narratives
about who perpetrators are.**

**Develop education/awareness
programming directed at **those
who cause harm** or have a high
potential to cause harm.**

Center **sex positive** approaches
to education.

**Invest resources in context-specific
educational programming
for students.**

Presentation Citations

