

16 Days of Activism: Why Gender-Based Violence Is Personal

The UN Women's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign runs from November 25 to December 10 each year. This year's theme, "UNITE! Invest to prevent violence against women and girls," emphasizes the need for systemic change to address gender-based violence (GBV).

The statistics are stark: nearly one in three women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence, with 51,100 women killed in femicides in 2023 alone.

Beyond the Numbers

As a queer AFAB person, I live with the constant shadow of gender-based violence looming over my daily existence. This isn't just statistics to me, it's deeply personal.

My mother was raped, and her attacker walked free, never facing any consequences for the trauma he inflicted. That injustice burns inside me, fueling both rage and determination. Every time I hear another survivor's story, I feel that same mix of anger and resolve.

While I can't donate money right now, I pour my heart into being the safe space I wish my mother had had. I listen. I believe. I support. When people trust me with their stories, I hold that trust sacred.

The 16 Days of Activism campaign fills me with both hope and urgency: hope because it shows we're finally addressing these issues on a global scale, and urgency because we've already lost too many lives to gender-based violence.

From #MeToo to Global Action

This campaign directly connects to the #MeToo movement, illustrating how grassroots activism can evolve into institutional action. Like #MeToo, the 16 Days of Activism demonstrates the power of collective voice in challenging systemic violence and oppression.

The campaign's emphasis on investing in prevention aligns with feminist theory's focus on addressing the root causes of gender-based violence rather than just its symptoms. The story of Lyudmila Huseynova, a Ukrainian activist and survivor of conflict-related sexual violence who now advocates for other survivors, exemplifies how "the personal is political," individual experiences of violence connect to broader systemic issues and can fuel collective action for change.

What We Can Do

As always, marginalized communities have to fight tooth and nail to protect ourselves and others. But fighting doesn't always mean marching in the streets or making donations, though those matter too.

Sometimes it means creating the safe spaces we need. It means listening without judgment. It means believing survivors. It means holding space for people's pain and their healing.

The work of preventing gender-based violence requires all of us, not just survivors, not just women, not just queer folks. It requires systemic investment in education, in support services, and in changing the cultural conditions that allow violence to persist. It requires challenging power structures and demanding accountability.

Every person deserves better than to live in fear. And I'm committed to fighting for that future, one conversation, one act of support, one safe space at a time.

Learn more about the 16 Days of Activism campaign and how to get involved at [UN Women](#).