



History of Denim Day

ROME – ITALY, 1997

MORNING

An 18-year-old girl is picked up by her 45-year-old instructor for her very first driving lesson. An hour later, raped and abandoned by him in alley, she has to make her way back home. Undeterred, she reports the incident and the case is prosecuted. The driving instructor is convicted of rape and sentenced to jail.

MONTHS LATER

The perpetrator appeals the sentence. The case makes it all the way to the Italian Supreme Court, where the case against the driving instructor is overturned and the perpetrator is released.

In a statement released by the Head Judge, he argued, “Because the victim wore very, very tight jeans, she had to help him remove them...and by removing the jeans...it was no longer rape but consensual sex.” Enraged by the verdict, the women in the Italian Parliament launched into immediate action and protested by wearing jeans on the steps of the Italian Parliament building. This call to action motivated and emboldened the California Senate and Assembly to do the same—and a movement was born.

“This is a day when we wear jeans as a visible means of protest against misconceptions that surround sexual assault.”

A Call to Action

Denim Day has become a world wide event that calls to community members and elected officials to stand with survivors of sexual assault to wear denim in protest of what happened in Italy in 1997. This is a time to coordinate events and raise awareness about sexual assault, and its myths and misconceptions, in order to support survivors and bring an end to this crime.

Information adapted from the Denim Day Toolkit from the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Warren County, NJ, 2010.

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