

Introduce yourself:

Who is one pop-culture (actor, musician, politician, etc.) person you appreciate or admire & why?

Lin Manuel Miranda is my favorite Cultural Icon. Come on he wrote, produced directed and starred in Hamilton. (Hamilton) He continues to break barriers by casting persons of color in all of the major roles in his musicals. (it is about the controversial founding father, Alexander Hamilton).

Katy: Tarana Burke is the founder of the #metoo movement. I admire her as she is an advocate just like myself who is a victim of sexual assault. I watch a lot of documentaries on sexual abuse specifically with Jeffery Epstein, Harvey Weinstein, and Woody Allen. She has been in several educating others about sexual assault and her passion to combat this horrific crime.

What is Mountain Crisis Services? Kristin

MCS founded in 1990. We provide support services to victims/survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Some of the services we provide is a 24-hour confidential hotline, legal advocacy, individual peer counselling and support groups. We have an emergency safe home for anyone that is fleeing from domestic violence. An additional resource is our transitional housing program. A new added resource is we can now assist survivors that are fleeing with their pets. We provide education and outreach to the community.

How & why did you get into this line of work?

Kristin: I have been in this line of work for 16 years I myself am survivor of sexual abuse as a child. Sexual abuse 40 years ago was not talked about. There was no education in the schools. There was minimal support. I wanted to give back. I wanted to help others that were going through this horrific crime. I want to be part of an organization that believes survivors, one that does not victim blame and supports them through their journey in healing.

Katy: I went through a traumatic domestic violence relationship from when I was 18-almost 21 years old. From there, I had an extremely tough time adapting/understanding what I went through. I sought help from MCS in 2016, moved, came back. By chance, I scrolled through Facebook and saw they were hiring. I went in for the interview, Kristen called me back 2 hours later offering me a position. I took it. And it was one of the best decisions I ever made. I further healed from my abuse as MCS gave me the platform to tell my story and received much support from people I would of never thought would reach out to me. I love my job and what I do.

What exactly is Denim Day?

Kristin: In Italy in 1992 a woman was raped by her 45-year-old driving instructor. He was convicted of rape and sentenced to jail. The perpetrator appealed the decision and it ended up in the Italian Supreme Court. In 1998 an Italian Supreme court overturned, dismissed the rape conviction and released the perpetrator. The judge stated that because the woman wore very very tight jeans, she had to help him remove the jean. It was no longer rape but consensual. Enraged by the verdict, the women Italy launched a protest wearing jeans on the steps of the Supreme Court. Every 4th Wednesday In April we dedicate this day to wearing jeans to support victims of sexual assault.

Would you say that this type of stuff still happens or goes on?

Katy: 1000000% YES! Since 1999, rape laws have been challenged all over the world. In 2018, eruptions occurred in Ireland over the acquittal of a 27-year-old man of rape citing that his 17-year-

old victim wore a lacy thong which consented to sex in a muddy alleyway. March 13, 2019 an Italian supreme court overturned a rape verdict by arguing the rape victim was “too ugly” to be raped. Citing one of the Peruvian men convicted, listed her as “Viking” in her phone, while the other said she was “too masculine” they would not have rape her. However, the victim was so badly raped that she required stitches from the trauma. Most recently on March 18, 2021, Arkansas SB6 was passed 26-6 vote, requiring victims of rape and incest to have first reported the crime to law enforcement before they could undergo an abortion past the 20-week limit required by the state. These are just a few examples of recent rape convictions or laws that have been placed to further victimize victims of these crimes.

What is rape culture? Do you think that this is a reality or an issue here in America?

Katy: According to Marshall University, Rape Culture is defined as an environment in which rape is prevalent and in which sexual violence against women is normalized and excused in the media and popular culture. Some examples of this are victim blaming. Just recently, 8 weeks ago a 21-year-old Fresno State wrestler was arrested on charges with raping a drugged victim, kidnapping to commit rape, raping an unconscious victim, battery and contributing to the delinquency of a minor. This minor aged 15, went to a party where this individual was.

The rape occurred in November; he was arrested January 22nd. The party took place off campus and alcohol/marijuana was being used by patrons. The 15-year-old female became so inebriated, she could not take care of herself. From there, that’s when everything occurred. Naturally, this was posted on ABC30 news Facebook. My comment to this post was this: “She was drugged, legally you cannot consent if drugged, unconscious, or in and out state of mind. I am glad they took appropriate steps to get him off campus. I hope she is receiving much support and empathy” which in case caused an uproar. People accusing me of not knowing the case, convicting this guy on a public forum, and to quit making assumptions, however, these are some of the comments that were made by Fresno community members in defense of my comment:

“15-year-old really, what was she doing in a college party?”

“just because she did drugs with some guy and had sex with him doesn’t mean she was raped.”

“are you really implying that 15-year-olds get raped at parties all the time, because I have been to a crap ton and never once heard anything about anyone getting raped.”

“Her parents should be in jail, not this guy.”

“So, what if the guy was on drugs too, you can't consent while under the influence right, how do we know she didn't rape him.”

By these comments, it shows that rape culture is alive and well within society today. This was just in Fresno, around the world, victims of rape are being blamed for the action. Police officers, attorneys and more often say “well look how you were dressed, you were clearly asking for it” or “well why were you at the party?” By saying these things, you are further victim blaming and more than often, this is the reason people do not come forward. So, for the short answer, YES, rape culture is very much a reality and an issue in America. We need to support victims, believe them, and if you do not know what to do or say to a victim, find them someone who can. For example, calling your local rape

crisis center (for mariposa it would be us at Mountain Crisis Services) and get them the help they need.

What are some concerns specific to young person culture in regards to these topics?

Effects of Sexual Violence

Young people who experience sexual violence may experience: poor academic performance, sexual risk taking behavior, pregnancy, and self-harm.

Sexual assaults against youth happen in Teens who experience sexual violence may occur in familiar places.

- 31% Survivor's home
- 24% Survivor's neighborhood
- 44% Survivor's school

Oppression and Sexual Violence against Teens

Sexual violence does not happen in isolation. Oppression (racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, etc) is one of the root causes of sexual violence. Youth of color, homeless youth, and LGBTQ youth are more likely to experience sexual violence.

Suggestions if a youth discloses

I believe you — These can be the three most important words the survivor needs to hear. Young people may have tried to disclose prior to connecting with you and may have not been believed by others.

This was not your fault — Most victims will blame themselves; remind them that they didn't do anything to be treated this way.

Listen — Let them share their story, thoughts, and feelings. It may be the first opportunity they've had to talk about it. By actively listening, we become a supportive place for them to reach out to. It has taken a lot for you to make this phone call, and we are here for you when you need us — There are many reasons a teen may not reach out — fear, doubt, not wanting to report, etc. Acknowledging the strength it took to make the call can assist in the healing process for the teen.

What are some things that we as a society can take to stop this? Prevent this? **Kristin & Katy Start early with prevention education in the schools. Healthy relationships, good touch bad touch healthy boundaries, early on... children need to be educated in these areas. About 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys experience child sexual abuse at some point in childhood. 91% of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone the child or child's family knows. It is our responsibility as adults to educate youth.**

Katy: I would agree with Kristen, Prevention and Education is key for preventing this. Shifting boundaries is a very valuable and unique tool. Prevention specialists will go into the schools and educate teens, children, young adults about sexual assault and domestic violence (age appropriate). When Clay was our prevention specialist, they made a huge impact on the youth and we saw an increase in those numbers. Unfortunately, we have not had a prevention specialist since them, and with schools being closed to covid, we have been unable to educate our youth.

*If you could be any animal in the world, what would it be?

Kristin: **Dolphin, I love the ocean, they love to communicate, work as a team and they nurture from friendships, they love others!**

Katy: Last time I was interviewed, I stated that if I could be any animal, it would be a Mola Mola. I still stand with this answer as it sunbathes at the top of the ocean surface and allows currents to take them away. They are curious animals, and very clumsy swimmers... in which I feel I can relate as I am also curious and clumsy!

*Final question for the guest. What is one Master Jedi piece of wisdom you would like to share with the world?

My favorite quote from Martin Luther King

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter"

Katy: As master Yoda said *"Beware of the dark side: anger, fear, aggression" I feel it is easy to get angry or aggressive, it is a natural human being emotion. However, I have seen anger, frustration, and fear become more prevalent since the pandemic hit. Learn to love, respect, and respond empathetically if you do not have the same feelings or opinions as others. Just be a good person.*