



Cultivating a culture of consent

By Shade Mary-Ann Olaoye





For years, the issue of sexual violence continues to be a threat to the safety and wellbeing of women, and gender nonconforming folks in the society. Reports are being made daily of cases of sexual violence and many more remain unheard of, while others are never served justice. As the 16 days of activism continues, it is vital to reiterate the importance of consent, how it can be webbed into society and adhered to.



What is consent culture?



While the term rape culture has helped us so far to interrogate the perpetuated crimes of sexual violence, looking deep at how it manifests in public and private places such as the school, church, home, while we seek justice. One potent way to dismantle this culture of rape is to offset it by teaching a culture of consent.

Consent culture are teachings that normalize the actions of consent such as; asking for consent respectfully and adhering to the decision of the other person. Consent on the other hand is enthusiastic, voluntary, cannot be given under the influence, under duress, or coercion, it can be withdrawn at any time.



Consent culture seeks to overthrow the tenants of rape culture like; victim-blaming, slut-shaming, and discrediting the story of a survivor and discrediting the fact that boys get raped too. It recognizes the autonomy individuals have over their body and their right to choose what they want or not.





WHY IS CONSENT CULTURE IMPORTANT?

- With the normalization of consent culture comes the removal of embarrassment and shame that revolves around sex, want, and desire - all of which are natural human phenomenon.
- With consent culture it is not the victims' responsibility to protect themselves from rape or tells gives them ways to avoid rape, rather it holds the assaulter responsible for their actions.
- When society is raised to ask for consent, it becomes centered on accountability rather than the topic of avoiding rape.
- Consent culture counters positively the rape culture which creates safe spaces for women and men to feel secure in, a place where men do not feel ashamed to come out and talk about their rape experiences.



How to cultivate consent culture

STOP VICTIM-BLAMING, STOP
GLAMORIZING BOY RAPE AND
SUPPORT SURVIVORS:



The prevailing culture sends a message to women in particular as it blames them for being “wild and out of control.” It dissects a woman's rape experience from the angle of; what were you wearing, why did you drink too much, don't go out late in the night and light play the rape of a man by insinuating that; men never get raped, he must have enjoyed it. This empowers the abuser and gives him power because he is absolved from all forms of responsibility. Consent culture counters this by saying that the only person responsible, and to be blamed for a rape incident is the rapist, after all, consent was never given in the first place.



#16DaysOfActivism



UNDERSTAND AND TEACHING:

Consent culture should be taught from an early age as a part of sex education. Children and even adults should be coached to understand that asking for consent and respecting responses afterward is the standard. While understanding consent might seem like a no brainer, with it being buzz word of today and all, a lot of people still don't get it. It is important to understand what consent really is, it is important to understand that the absence of "no" is not "yes", and a "yes" given might not be for everything else or forever.

