



How long, O God?

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An [article](#) about the prevalence of rape in the U.S. recently came across my news feed. I'm not surprised to see an uptick in reporting about sexual violence as we approach the first anniversary of the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, who was accused of sexual assault.

One thing is clear. Trauma around sexuality is endemic in our country—and in the world. NPR's article is full of disturbing statistics: one in sixteen women in the United States reported that their first experience with sexual intercourse was rape, which equates to over three million women in our country. In Tanzania, approximately one in three women and girls ages 13-24 have experienced at least one instance of sexual violence before turning 18, according to [The Center for Reproductive Rights](#).

Issues of sexual assault are embedded within other justice issues, including the legacy of Euro-centric white missionaries imposing religious shame about the body and sexuality on those whose communities they invaded. That history and what has ensued is intricately woven into the fabric of global white supremacist patriarchal institutions, policies, politics. We can easily despair, realizing that these institutions are designed to keep things the way they are: racist, misogynistic, and heteronormative. We can be tempted in times such as these to think modern society is perpetually broken and nothing will ever change.

I imagine hearing Psalm 13, cried out in anguish or whispered softly in despair by voices around the globe, in different languages, simultaneously raising a chorus of voices demanding justice:

How long, O God? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I bear pain in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? (Psalm 13:1-2, NRSV)

How long, O God? How long will we dismiss the epidemic of sexual trauma in our country and our world?

How long will we keep the secrets of those in power?

How long will we “shush” survivors and refuse them justice?

How long until we repent, break the silence, lament, heal our ways?

We can start by refusing to keep silent.

We can start by doing our own personal healing work, whether that is the work of healing as a survivor of sexual assault, or addressing our own toxic masculinity, or inviting accountability for our complicity in flawed systems, or all the above.

We can start by getting over our societal embarrassment and shame around discussing sex and sexuality.

Every time we take an action toward healing, we plant a seed of hope for those who have gone before us and those who are coming up behind us.

May the garden we sow be worthy of the last part of Psalm 13:

I trust in your love;
my heart rejoices
in the deliverance you bring.
I'll sing to you, YHWH,
for being so good to me. (Psalm 13:5-6, The Inclusive Bible)

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