

the everyday activist guide



FOR ENDING WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT

FUTURES
WITHOUT VIOLENCE

We are living in an extraordinary time. Survivors of sexual violence are coming forward and some are finally being heard and believed.

And while a few powerful abusers are paying the price for their unlawful conduct, workplaces overall have been slow to respond to the structural, institutional, and cultural norms that underlie #metoo in the workplace.

But what if we could stop sexual assault and harassment in the workplace before it happens?

→ **We can. Together.** ←

This guide highlights the powerful strategies engaged in by activists and survivors—some of them profiled here—and the steps YOU can take, both in and out of your workplace to end sexual harassment in the world of work.

Who created this guide?

Futures Without Violence, with support from the NoVo Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Blue Shield of California Foundation, worked with advocates, workers, and survivors to lift up the stories, insights, and successes of workers who have been fighting for some time to end workplace sexual harassment and assault.



Who is the guide for?

YOU. So you can take meaningful steps to end sexual harassment and assault in the workplace.

Special Thanks to:

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers, National Domestic Workers Alliance, Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, Justice for Migrant Women, Rhiza Collective, Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, the Ya Basta! Coalition, Maintenance Cooperation Trust Fund, One Fair Wage, and many other partner organizations, survivors, and advocates committed to ending gender-based violence and promoting workers' rights. And with special and deep gratitude to UltraViolet, for their thought-partnership and guidance in outreach for this guide and its strategies.

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What's next?

This interactive guide will be regularly updated with new information and stories from the front lines. **If you have a story to share, please send an email to Activist@futureswithoutviolence.org.**



meet the activists

Let's meet the activists and organizations battling workplace sexual harassment and violence—particularly in low-wage industries.

We're highlighting some of their most powerful strategies so YOU too can take action to make your workplace safer.



Georgina

Who: Janitors

What they achieved: Groundbreaking legislation in California

How they did it: Peer-to-peer organizing and education

Who

Women janitors typically work alone at night and for low pay. They're especially vulnerable to exploitation, assault, and abuse. Many janitors in California are immigrant women of color who can't afford to lose their jobs and are less likely to report incidents or abuse.

Georgina Hernández had high hopes for her new janitorial job. Instead, she was harassed and raped on the job by her supervisor.

"It was something so dirty, so disgusting, that I didn't know what to do," she said. "... I shut myself into my room to cry. And I asked myself, 'What more do I have to go through to be able to continue working and earning money to support my children?' I asked myself if others were going through the same."

At first Georgina remained silent. After her supervisor threatened her, she sought help and joined with other janitors to provide support for other survivors and take action to improve responses and change the culture in the janitorial industry.

What they achieved

The Property Service Workers Protection Act (Assembly Bill 1978), passed in 2016, requires all janitorial companies to conduct sexual harassment prevention training for employers and employees at least once every two years. All janitorial companies must also register in California in order to more easily track and investigate "bad actors" and "fly-by-night" janitorial firms.

How they did it

After Georgina spoke out about being sexually assaulted at work, she joined a *promotora*, or peer-educator program, launched by SEIU-United Service Workers West in partnership with Maintenance Cooperation Trust Fund, an organization that supports non-unionized janitors, and the East L.A. Women's Center.

Workers and survivors are best positioned to shape the response to sexual harassment and violence in their workplace. As *promotoras*, they educate their coworkers about their rights and resources.

"The *promotora* program has brought me to a place where I can speak out, not just for myself, but for other women," Georgina said. It gave workers a space to transcend stigma, shame, and trauma. It gave them the confidence to take action.

Georgina and the *promotoras* carried out a hunger strike to pressure Governor Jerry Brown to sign the [Property Service Workers Protection Act](#), which went into effect in January 2017.

what you can do in solidarity



Find out what protections against sexual harassment are in place for all workers, including low-wage workers, in your state.

What's missing? Who has been left out? What organizations are supporting legislative changes? How can you support those organizations' efforts? Bring up the law's failings with your local or national legislators at their offices, via email, or at town halls.



Who

Farmworkers in the United States face inhumane working conditions. When Nely worked on a farm in Immokalee, Florida, a typical work day began before dawn and lasted ten hours. There was often no access to water, bathrooms, or breaks. Women, in particular, faced tough working conditions. Sexual assault, stalking, and harassment in the fields were widespread. Due to language barriers, an absence of legal protections, and poor pay, Nely and her coworkers had little or no recourse to protect themselves.

“Supervisors did use intimidation,” Nely said, “showing weapons, or shouting, or yelling at other workers to show their power, to intimidate you. And this is something, as a worker, you can’t imagine reporting.”

Nely and others formed the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a worker-based human rights organization. They have fought for and secured better wages and working conditions, including safety from sexual assault in the fields and farms.

Nely

Who: Farmworkers

What they achieved: Safer working conditions and improved wages through the Fair Food Program

How they did it: Organized with farmworkers and rallied consumers to win agreements with major produce buyers to improve conditions along the supply chains

What they achieved

Thanks to market consequences between the Fair Food Program’s zero tolerance for sexual violence, reported cases of rape and sexual assault have been virtually eliminated from participating farms, and sexual harassment has plummeted. The Fair Food Program has also combated economic insecurity through the commitment by buyers to pay an extra “penny per pound” of tomatoes, which has resulted in over \$30 million in wage bonuses to workers since the Program’s inception.

How they did it

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers created the Fair Food Program which rallied consumers to demand fruits and vegetables that have been grown on farms that provide safe and humane working conditions for farmworkers.

As more buyers signed on to the program and agreed to only buy from growers who would implement a new, worker-driven Code of Conduct and pay “a penny more per pound” for crops such as tomatoes, strawberries, and peppers, the program was able to combat economic insecurity and enact structures and systems to ensure greater worker protections.

The Fair Food Code of Conduct mandates protections against sexual assault and harassment, wage theft, unsafe working conditions, and other abuses.

Drafted by the workers themselves, the program requires distribution of worker-authored written and multimedia “Know Your Rights” materials at the point of hire, and peer-to-peer education throughout the season. Trainings are conducted in workers’ native languages.

Auditors with an independent third-party body conduct regular in-depth audits and run a 24-hour complaint resolution mechanism, which has resolved nearly 2,500 complaints since the beginning of the program.

what you can do in solidarity



Shop at grocery stores and fast food chains participating in the **Fair Food Program**. Also look for the **Fair Food label** to help you identify foods that are harvested by workers with the highest level of protection of rights.



Who

Hotel housekeepers often work in isolation. Most are women of color. Many are immigrants. And they are particularly at risk of sexual harassment and violence.

Nuris, an immigrant housekeeper from El Salvador, was sexually harassed by a hotel guest in Seattle.

“After this happened to me, it was hard because you sort of go into a panic,” she said. “You get very anxious, you don’t know how to act. At first, I didn’t feel like I was able to talk to anyone...I was afraid of being fired.”

Through her union, UNITE HERE! Local 8, Nuris reported the incident to her employer, which took action. She then became involved in the union’s campaign to make hotels safer workplaces for housekeepers and other hospitality workers.

Nuris

Who: Hotel workers

What they achieved: Legislation securing panic buttons and other protections against sexual harassment in hotels

How they did it: Surveying workers and launching a public-awareness campaign

What they achieved

City ordinances that require hotels to provide panic buttons (devices that immediately locate a worker in need of assistance). Several hotel chains such as [Marriott and Hilton](#) have since pledged to provide panic buttons for their workers in the United States. Some of the city ordinances also require hotels to keep a record of guests reported to have sexually harassed or assaulted hotel workers. They must warn workers if an accused guest returns to the hotel. If a sworn accusation of harassment or assault was made, the accused guest is banned from the hotel for three years.

How they did it

UNITE HERE! surveyed their members in Seattle and Chicago, finding that more than half of their workers had experienced workplace sexual harassment. They led public awareness campaigns to pressure lawmakers to act. They circulated petitions and UNITE HERE! Local 1 created a [#HandsOffPantsOn social media public awareness campaign](#).



what you can do in solidarity



Stay in hotels that participate in the Fair Hotel Program, which have committed to providing better working conditions and wages for employees. Find socially responsible hotels here: <https://unitehere.org/industry/hotels/>.

While many consumers routinely tip restaurant servers, hotel workers also rely on tips to supplement their wages. When workers are more economically secure, they are less vulnerable to the risks of reporting or confronting sexual harassment. For hotel housekeeping, a tip of \$4-\$10 per night (depending on how messy your room is, or the caliber of the hotel). It's important to tip the housekeeper for each night of your stay rather than giving one large tip at the end. You may not have the same housekeeper every day, and if the hotel doesn't allow workers to pool tips and distribute evenly, then you may not be providing a tip to the person who provided the service to you. Best practice is to leave a note each day with your tip that clearly indicates it is intended for the person who will clean your room.



Daniela and June

Who

Housekeepers, nannies, and elder-care providers often work in private homes. They're exempt from most employment and workplace protections. Like hotel workers, they're often women of color and immigrants and therefore vulnerable to workplace sexual harassment and violence.

Daniela, an immigrant from Mexico, was a teenaged nanny when she was sexually harassed by her employer. She fled the house to escape him. Afraid she would be blamed, not believed, or deported, Daniela didn't tell anyone for years. Then a friend connected her with the National Domestic Workers' Alliance, a network of more than 60 affiliate organizations dedicated to improving working conditions and strengthening protections from sexual harassment and other workplace abuses. She got involved with NDWA, connecting workers in New York City with resources.

June, a queer Jamaican immigrant, has performed domestic work in the U.S. for over 18 years. She is an organizer and leader with the 'We Dream in Black' program of NDWA, which centers the experiences of black nannies, home care workers, and housekeepers to provide policy recommendations and reforms needed to address low wages, rampant sexual harassment, and other abuses faced by domestic workers. She is a leading spokesperson in the #metoo movement sharing her personal experiences of verbal, physical, and sexual violence she experienced while working as a home care worker. She is a fierce campaigner against wage theft and advocates for affordable health care options for marginalized workers.

Who: Domestic workers

What they achieved: Passed the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights in eight states

How they did it: Domestic workers, allies, the National Domestic Workers Alliance, and local organizations to gain momentum for greater labor protections through worker-led organizing, lobbying, and mobilizing the people and families who rely on the labor of domestic workers.

What they achieved

New York passed the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights in 2010. Seven other states followed as well as the City of Seattle. These bills ensure fair working conditions, including a clause that protects domestic workers from sexual harassment and other forms of workplace abuse. In July of 2019, the Federal Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights was introduced in Congress.

How they did it

The NDWA shifted how people perceived domestic workers. Instead of "the help," they are valued employees who support homes, families, and care for children and the elderly. The organizations assisted workers in taking collective action and trained them—the ones most impacted by workplace sexual violence—to take on leadership roles and lobby and garner public support.

"I understand their struggle," Daniela said. "They're like me. Most of them are single moms, undocumented, and they need to know that this is the place where you can come and know that you have support, not only from me but from the whole team."

The NDWA has also worked to gain the support of employers and allies. They reach out to families that employ domestic workers, telling them about the Bill of Rights and how they can maintain safe work environments.

what you can do in solidarity



If you employ a domestic worker for child care, elder care, housekeeping, etc., at a minimum, provide the protections accorded in these [bills](#). If you have ever employed a domestic worker, and she has allowed you to work outside the home, have a career, or support your family, pay it forward by finding out if your state has a Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights or other legislation, and if not, contact your local representative to advocate for employment protections for these critical workers. Here are some other ways to take action: <https://www.domesticworkers.org/take-action>



Campesina Leaders

Who: *Campesinas*, or women farmworkers

What they achieved: Formed *Alianza Nacional de Campesinas*, a network of survivor support and advocacy

How they did it: Grassroots organizing, advocacy, and coalition-building

Who

Beginning in 1991 in California, farmworker women started a national movement of survivor-led grassroots advocacy and organizing. In 2010, *Alianza Nacional de Campesinas* (*Alianza*) was founded by a group of women representing farmworker-led organizations to address the needs, concerns, and vulnerabilities of farmworker women to rape and sexual harassment in the fields and farms, and other forms of violence against *campesinas* including domestic violence at home.

What they achieved

Alianza has helped thousands of women not only tell their stories—often for the first time—but transform their experiences into action. Members, some of them *organizers* and others *promotoras* (trained peer educators and advocates), educate other *campesinas* and farmworker communities about their rights and how to advocate for better working conditions. The group’s coalition-building efforts have provided more support to women farmworkers and helped pass laws to better protect them and ensure the implementation of these laws are effective.

How they did it

The *campesinas* planned events, conferences, and *teatros*, or theater performances, to inform and engage fellow women farmworkers and their communities. They created educational materials on sexual harassment and domestic violence. They lobbied politicians and strengthened services available to survivors of sexual harassment and violence. They also helped social service organizations adapt to better serve the particular needs of *campesinas*.



Activist Profile: Mily Trevino-Saucedo

Mily’s life as a *campesina* had not been easy. “So many of us had experienced sexual assault, harassment, and reproductive health problems thanks to the pesticides we were doused in,” she said. “We were all sick and tired of it.”

Mily found that organizations working on farmworker or immigrant issues tended to dismiss sexual harassment as just a “women’s issue,” and due to stigma and cultural taboos, rarely discussed it. She knew there was a need for women to form a collective—a space for and by *campesinas*—to share stories and work against the structures enforcing silence and enabling harassment. Mily was one of the co-founders of *Alianza*, which has become a powerful advocacy organization for women farmworkers, lifting up their voices and concerns.

what you can do in solidarity



Advocate for laws that provide the same employment protections for farmworkers as other workers such as overtime pay, and greater accountability for discrimination and harassment.

Assemble friends or coworkers to watch the Frontline documentary [Rape in the Fields](#) to raise awareness of sexual violence perpetrated against farmworker women and build alliance with the farmworker/survivor movement.



Who

The U.S. restaurant industry employs nearly 14 million workers and is the nation's largest source of sexual harassment claims.

Workers earning a sub-minimum wage depend almost entirely on tips, a situation that is associated with higher rates of sexual harassment from customers and managers. It encourages an environment where workers are dependent on pleasing the customer, and it makes it more difficult to push back against mistreatment. Saru co-founded Restaurant Opportunities Centers United to raise base wages and restore a balance of power in restaurants.

In 2019, Saru founded the organization [One Fair Wage](#), which advances policy and drives industry change to ensure that all workers in the United States are paid a living wage by their employers, or at least the full minimum wage.

Saru

Who: Restaurant workers

What they achieved: State and federal legislation raising base hourly pay for tipped workers and making tips the property of servers

How they did it: The One Fair Wage campaign

What they achieved

Seven states now require that restaurants pay the standard state minimum wage for those in the industry who work primarily for tips. ROC-United was also instrumental in getting Congress to pass a bill making tips the property of workers instead of the property of restaurant and bar owners.

How they did it

ROC-United established the One Fair Wage campaign. First, the organization researched the origins, extent, and scope of sexual harassment in restaurants and demonstrated the link between this conduct and servers working for tips. With this information in hand, they could win public support for legislative action. ROC-United also developed a national employer association, Restaurants Advancing Industry Standards in Employment, or RAISE, to provide guidance and support for restaurant owners who want to promote safe and respectful working environments. RAISE shows owners how to provide a safe work environment without hurting their bottom line. More than 750 employers now benefit from training and support and, importantly, stand behind campaigns to change laws in their states. Finally, ROC-United has mobilized customers. The group created [Diners United](#). Its accompanying [Diners' Guide](#) helps consumers choose restaurants that promote safer working conditions and a livable wage for their employees.

what you can do in solidarity



If you have a neighborhood restaurant or one that you frequent, ask the management if servers are paid one fair wage, and provide information on the risks to servers and benefits of becoming a “[high-road employer](#)”. When you dine out, see if the restaurant is recommended through the [Diners’ Guide](#). If you work in the restaurant industry, find out if there is a ROC affiliate in your community and look to see how you can get involved as an advocate. If there isn’t one, talk to your coworkers and think about starting one in your area.

→ activists in action ←

Created by advocate and activist Mónica Ramirez, the Bandana Project is a public awareness campaign that addresses sexual violence in the fields and farms perpetrated against campesinas. Farmworker women decorate bandanas as a symbol of their experiences with sexual assault and harassment. In acts of solidarity, community organizations, advocates, government officials, friends, and activists decorate bandanas as well with words of encouragement and support, or inspirational drawings or art. The bandanas are then exhibited in public spaces to demonstrate a shared commitment to ending sexual violence in the fields. While this project has done so much to inform the public of this issue, it also allows campesinas to better understand and take power over their own stories and work to create change themselves.



Learn more about The Bandana Project here:

<https://justice4women.org/the-bandana-project>



**10 things YOU can
do as an “everyday
activist”**

1 Know the law and your rights.

Sexual harassment is a form of workplace discrimination that violates federal law—but only if there are more than fifteen people at your workplace. Domestic workers, many home-care workers, and farmworkers are not protected. Many states have **fair employment practices laws**, however, and these laws may cover different workers and workplaces from federal law.

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2 Demand better workplace policies and anti-harassment training.

Look into whether your employer has an employee handbook or manual containing anti-harassment and anti-retaliation policies, confidential reporting and complaint procedures, and offers resources. If you are in a union, check the collective bargaining agreement for negotiated protections against workplace sexual harassment. Ask your employer or union to create or update new policies if existing ones are insufficient. Also make sure your employer provides regular, mandatory, in-person training for all employees on preventing and responding to workplace sexual harassment. Effective workplace educational programs create a workplace culture that promotes respect, dignity, equity, and safety. These programs also help employees understand their rights, provide strategies for how to be “upstander” instead of a bystander, and provides information on what accountability measures are in place to address incidents of harassment.

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3 Get and give support.

If you experience sexual harassment or violence in the workplace, know that it is not your fault and you are not alone. If you feel comfortable doing so, consider confiding in a trusted friend, coworker, or family member who can listen and offer support. Individuals process experiences of sexual harassment in different ways and have different needs. A survivor may first feel shocked that it happened and may even want to deny it, might feel ashamed or to blame, or immediately angry and want to take action. All or none of these responses are completely normal. If you are experiencing some of the reactions listed here, then please consider seeking support from a counselor, sexual assault service provider in your community, or close friends.

If you witness sexual harassment at work, consider if it's safe to intervene for you as well as the target of the abusive conduct — check out [Hollaback](#)'s resources on bystander intervention. Reach out directly to the individual experiencing harassment, both to offer support and validation. [If someone discloses to you that they have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace](#), recognize that choosing how to respond is an intensely personal and difficult process, with potential ramifications for the target's job and career. Provide assurances of your

continued support, whichever route the target of harassment chooses to take. Offer to accompany them for difficult meetings or interactions. If you have information about the incident, conduct, or parties involved, offer to add your voice to theirs as a witness. But most importantly, listen, and try not to substitute what you may think should be done for what the survivor wants or needs.

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4 Contact your elected officials.

Advocate for Congress to do the following:

- Extend the statute of limitations for filing a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission from 180 days to at least three years;
- Remove the caps on compensatory and punitive damages for sexual harassment claims;
- Allow survivors to hold both perpetrators and employers liable for damages;
- Extend federal protections to include all employment situations so that all workers are protected; and,
- Eliminate the tipped sub-minimum wage.

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5 Support worker campaigns.

Rally friends and coworkers. Spread the word on social media, donate to a workers' rights group, or organize a fundraising event. Support measures such as the **Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights** in your state.

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6 Get to know your coworkers.

Get to know the people you work with so you can better share information and work together to take action for an improved workplace environment. Support networks in the workplace to reduce the incidence of sexual harassment and ensure greater accountability. The larger the network, the more power you have to bring about change. Always ensure that the workers who are directly affected by sexual harassment inform the strategy and lead decision-making. Finally, document any problems—through surveys, research, or crowd-sourced documents. You can't fix what you don't know.

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7 Join a workers' rights network or union.

Workers' rights networks and unions help protect workers from sexual harassment through provisions contained in a collective bargaining agreement or through collective action. If your workplace is unionized, make sure your union is taking the issue of sexual harassment seriously.

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8 If you identify as a man, stand up, and speak out.

If you see something, say something. Call out behavior you witness that is disrespectful, abusive, discriminatory, or sexist. Help ensure that there are explicit efforts to support, mentor, and promote colleagues who might be marginalized and targeted because of their gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, and/or immigration status. Advocate for them to be heard, respected, and promoted.

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9 Patronize businesses that treat their workers fairly.

Use the **Diners' Guide** to eat at restaurants that provide better wages, benefits, and promotion opportunities to their employees. Shop at grocery stores and fast food chains that participate in the **Fair Food Program**. Also look for the **Fair Food label** to help identify foods that are harvested by workers with the highest level of protection of rights. Use the **Fair Hotel Guide** when booking hotels.

DINER'S GUIDE

FAIR FOOD PROGRAM

FAIR HOTEL GUIDE



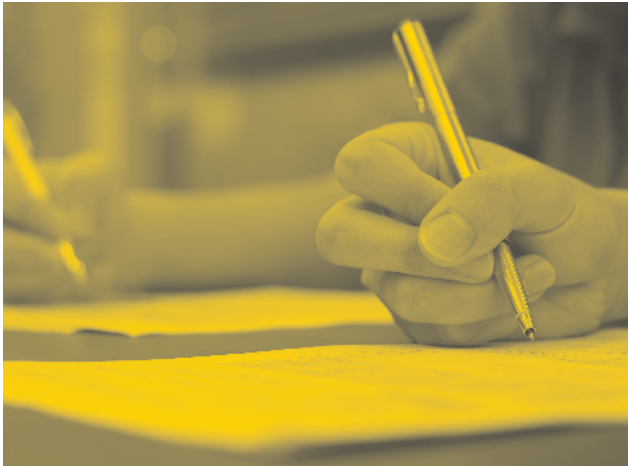
10 Invest in companies committed to ensuring workers' rights.

Consult the Criterion Institute's toolkit for leveraging finance as a way to end gender-based violence. It includes practical questions to ask your financial advisor to ensure your investments promote gender equity and support companies that have gender and racial diversity in the boardroom and in leadership positions, pay fair and equitable wages, and give workers generous family leave and other supportive benefits.

CRITERION INSTITUTE



**examples of
“everyday activists”
making change at
their workplaces**



Women at Nike had been filing complaints about sexual harassment and gender discrimination for years, but in the summer of 2017, frustrated by their lack of progress and following the high profile departures of three female executives, they began circulating a survey among the company's female employees to document the extent of the problem.

Delivered to CEO Mark Parker in March 2018, the completed surveys showcased a pattern of systemic sexual harassment and gender discrimination as well as a culture in which complaints were covered up or ignored. This grassroots data collection effort prevented leadership from dismissing employee complaints as a few isolated incidents and elicited public scrutiny, resulting in 11 executives leaving the company and a policy and practice overhaul including mandatory manager training for sexual harassment.



Prompted by the news that Google paid out over \$100 million to executives who left the company in the wake of sexual misconduct allegations, over 20,000 employees walked off the job in 50 cities around the world on November 1, 2018.

Within a week following this historic collective action, Google ended mandatory forced arbitration for sexual harassment claims –allowing employees greater avenues for legal recourse – and increased transparency in their sexual harassment complaint process. Despite these achievements, Google employees are still working together to achieve the rest of their demands, including improved employee representation, increased protections for temporary or contract workers, and an end to discriminatory pay practices; they are particularly focused on preventing retaliation against those filing complaints and are continuing to leverage the power of group protest as a way to protect individuals from being targeted.



In March 2019, a female employee emailed other women at Microsoft for advice on how to break through the glass ceiling. Dozens of women responded, detailing their own experiences of discrimination and sexual harassment, resulting in an email thread almost 90 pages long.

Released to the media, garnering responses from top executives including CEO Satya Nadella, and inspiring a company-wide series of Q&A sessions, this thread spurred Microsoft management to revamp their sexual harassment policies. All managers are now required to complete training on how to handle sexual harassment claims; the reporting process has been centralized and streamlined; and employees filing a complaint have access to an Employee Advocacy Team to guide them through the process. Building off this success, Microsoft employees are now publicly and collectively documenting disparities in compensation through a shared salary spreadsheet.

Now tell us what you did!



We're mapping the wave of activism that is sweeping the country. **Email us at Activist@futureswithoutviolence.org to let us know what action you took and to sign up to receive updates, information, resources, and tools on preventing sexual harassment and violence in the workplace.**

“Stepping onto a brand-new path is difficult, but not more difficult than remaining in a situation, which is not nurturing to the whole woman.”

- Maya Angelou

