

CLEAR ———
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FESTIVAL ———

News Release Thursday 23rd July 2015

The UK's first ever festival to talk about sexual assault and abuse, organised by survivors and experts, begins next week

From Thursday 30th July to Sunday 2nd August South London's Old Paradise Yard doors will open for the country's first ever festival to help people to discuss and address the growing problem of sexual assault and abuse in the UK.

Members of the public, journalists, artists, experts and comedians will team up with survivors to create an original space to talk about topics that are traditionally seen as taboo or too difficult to discuss. Sessions like "What do we tell the kids about sexual abuse?" and "Why do they do it?" will run alongside art installations, a comedy night featuring Josie Long, and a discussion on how the media reports sexual crimes, chaired by BBC's Marcus Ryder alongside expert Dr Nina Burrowes, survivor Winnie M Li and journalists Radhika Sanghani from the Telegraph and the BBC's Alison Holt.

With more and more survivors of sexual assault coming forward following high profile cases of abuse such as Jimmy Savile and the crimes in Rotherham, there has never been a more pressing time to find ways of talking about the causes, impact and frequency of sexual crimes.

Earlier this year, a group of British survivors teamed up with experts and volunteers to crowdfund for this new initiative and the [campaign](#) to create the [Clear Lines Festival](#) reached over double its target from 138 backers to help pay for the venue, filming and artists.

Festival co-founder and expert psychologist Dr Nina Burrowes said:

"Sexual abuse is both something we're always talking about and rarely talking about. It's constantly in the news and constantly something we worry about. But rarely do we ask the more difficult questions and try to find the answers together.

"All of us are living with sexual abuse. Whether we know it or not, all of us know someone who has been a victim. So we need to talk about abuse in a whole new way. It's not just a conversation for politicians and journalists, or activists and survivors. It's everyone's job to start thinking and talking about abuse."

Festival co-founder and survivor Winnie M Li said:

"Our society feels too ashamed to look a rape victim like me in the eye, to ask about what happened to us, how we feel about our attacker — and what we are doing to recover."

"So often real-life experiences are different from how they're portrayed in the media. We (Winnie and Dr Nina Burrowes) came up with the idea of the festival over coffee on the 7th anniversary of my rape*. I thought if only we could create a space where artists, the public, and experts could come together, we could shed some light on some of the human stories

behind sexual assault and abuse, look at the reality of the offender – how and why do they offend – and reach a greater understanding about it.”

*Winnie M Li writes about her attack in Belfast in 2008 [in this post](#).

Festival sponsor and organiser of the media panel Nathalie McDermott from On Road Media said:

“Although there seems to be a lot of stories in the media about sexual crimes, when you look at the broader picture, the focus tends to be on the types of crimes that are most rare like stranger rape or false accusations of rape. With the media tendency to tell a story about crime in terms of “good” and “evil”, we move further away from looking at the reality of sexual crimes, for example that most take place close to home by people we know, or that survivors can often have much more complex feelings towards their attacker, or that there isn’t sufficient preventative help for potential or previous offenders.”

Contact

For further information contact info@clearlines.org.uk or see www.clearlines.org.uk or for interviews, please contact:

Dr Nina Burrowes: 07954 580 701

Winnie M Li: 07884 077 720

Nathalie McDermott: 077 6162 6162

Notes to Editors

Where and when:

The Clear Lines Festival will be held from **Thursday July 30th to Sunday August 2nd 2015** at l'klectik, Old Paradise Yard, 20 Carlisle Lane, [SE1 7LG](#).

Tickets:

All events are open to the public and most are free but places are extremely limited. Tickets are available [here](#) on Eventbrite.

Schedule:

<http://clearlines.org.uk/schedule/>

Video:

[Watch survivors](#) of sexual assault and festival volunteers talk about why it's time for a different conversation that involves all of us, asking better questions and looking for better answers.

Why the name ‘Clear Lines’?

The festival's name is derived from Robin Thicke's controversial hit, '[Blurred Lines](#)'. The song was banned from university campuses all over the UK for its explicit lyrics that were accused of [advocating non-consensual sex](#).

Statistics

473,000 people aged over 16 are victims of a sex offence every year in England and Wales. The equivalent of 10 women are raped or seriously sexually assaulted (assault with penetration) every hour in England and Wales; figure includes children (from the Statistics bulletin published in January 2013 An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales by Ministry of Justice, Home Office & the Office for National Statistics.)