

SAFE BAR COLLECTIVE

Making DC's Bars and Restaurants Safer for *Everyone*

In 2016, Collective Action for Safe Spaces (CASS) worked with Defend Yourself to re-launch the Safe Bars program, a training to equip front of house bar and restaurant staff to recognize and respond to sexual harassment among staff and patrons. The program worked to increase staff's understanding of the dynamics of sexual aggression and provide them with strategies to prevent sexual harassment from escalating to sexual assault, specifically in DC nightlife.

20 bars and restaurants became certified Safe Bars in 2016.

This report provides an overview of analyzed survey data from evaluations given to all bar and restaurant staff who completed the Safe Bars training in 2016, in addition to data collected from local and national sources, which collectively informed the next steps that CASS is taking to revamp the program in 2017, with a renewed commitment to DC's most marginalized communities.

WHAT WE FOUND OUT

Out of the 104 bar and restaurant staff members surveyed:

- **88%** of respondents reported an **increased understanding of the dynamics of sexual violence** and the connection between sexual assault and alcohol
- **90%** of respondents reported that the **workshop gave them more options** for dealing with sexual aggression in a restaurant or bar setting
- **90%** of respondents expressed confidence that **they would use the skills learned** in the workshop to respond to sexual harassment

Here are the most important things bar and restaurant staff said they learned:

- "Don't be a bystander because intervention can prevent assault."
- "I have the power to intervene."
- "To pay attention to body language and situations."

Here are some of the questions that arose:

- What do we do when a patron becomes violent?
- How do we respond when the harasser is a manager or colleague?
- What are our legal rights when it comes to confronting aggressive patrons?

We also made some observations.

While our surveys did not request demographic data about bar and restaurant staff, we noticed something *qwhite* interesting. Very few people of color — and even fewer women of color — worked in the front of house at bars and restaurants. That means that women of color are not only less likely to interact directly with patrons; it also means that people of color are relegated to the back of the house in even lower paying positions.

According to a 2015 study by the Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC), restaurant workers continue to be racially segregated — **and women of color are most severely impacted.**



The study found that women and workers of color are largely concentrated in the lowest paying segments of the restaurant industry, frequently working in the back of the house, or the kitchen, while 81% of management and 78% of higher level non-management positions, such as captain, manager, and bartender are occupied by white workers who are disproportionately men. Workers of color also experienced limited mobility, with many being denied promotions, and 28% of those denied citing race as the primary reason for their lack of opportunities. Workers of color received 56% lower earnings compared to equally qualified white workers.

This data raised the question: We're making bars safer – but safer for who?

In order to cultivate a safe environment for people who are frequently marginalized, people who are part of communities that have been marginalized must be on the frontlines.

CASS's work since the release of our 2015 strategic plan has had a commitment to uplift the voices and experiences of D.C.'s most marginalized communities and particularly transgender women of color who are pushed out of the traditional workforce by discrimination, risk violence when engaging in work that has been criminalized, and face high rates of harassment when accessing public spaces.

The unemployment rate among Black trans people is 55 percent in DC.

According to the 2015 D.C. Trans Needs Assessment conducted by local community groups, there is a 36 percent unemployment rate among D.C.'s transgender population, and **the unemployment rate soars to 55 percent among Black trans people.** Research shows that unemployment among trans people is directly connected to discrimination. The same study showed that 40 percent of transgender adults were refused at least one job because of their gender identity.

Another report by the D.C. Office of Human Rights showed that **48 percent of D.C. employers appeared to prefer a less qualified cisgender applicant over a more qualified transgender applicant.** While it is important to note that sample numbers from the D.C. Office of Human Rights study are low and therefore inconclusive, it is also significant that **the restaurant industry had the highest percentage of discriminatory responses.**

Transgender adults, and especially transgender women of color, also face the highest rates of physical and sexual assault in public spaces in D.C. – disproportionately experiencing harassment and violence as a result of their marginalization. The 2008 Pulse of Equality study by GLAAD showed that **people who know a transgender person are more likely to be accepting of transgender people overall.** The solution then is to bring trans women of color out of the margins with economic and social opportunities that have historically been denied.

MAKING BARS SAFE FOR DC'S MOST MARGINALIZED – AND THEREFORE SAFE FOR EVERYONE.

Enter the Safe Bar Collective.

In this new program, CASS will take a three pronged approach. With the data we collected from the Safe Bars program, we're working to improve our curriculum and make it more inclusive, including an expanded conversation on race and how it can affect experiences with sexual violence and hate-based harassment.

We'll partner with ROC to create employment opportunities to trans people of color by training program participants with specific job and social skills to prepare them for work in the front of the house at local bars and restaurants. CASS will leverage its existing partnerships with 27 bars that have been trained to cultivate safe environments and offer supportive employment.

The Safe Bar Collective will then provide ongoing support to help these workers maintain employment with access to transportation, hygiene kits, food, and a supportive group environment.

By building the capacity of bars and restaurants to support marginalized workers, and actively supporting trans people of color in accessing and maintaining supportive employment, the Safe Bar Collective will work to make public spaces safer for everyone.



Learn more at bit.ly/SafeBarCollective

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