

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Stands With Rihanna: “She is not responsible for the violence perpetrated against her.”

Washington, DC -- When singer Chris Brown reportedly assaulted his girlfriend, fellow singer Rihanna, following an argument on Sunday, February 8th, there was an immediate public outcry of support for Rihanna.

Visibly battered and bruised, Rihanna has joined the ranks of millions of women, becoming part of a horrifying statistic of 1 in 4 women who will be beaten by their intimate partners during their lifetimes.¹

By Wednesday, February 11th, however, the tune had changed. With new information alleging that Rihanna had begun the argument herself, public support began to waver. Some implied, and others firmly stated, that because Rihanna may have started the argument, she deserved the subsequent abuse she suffered. Now as stories circulate about the couple's reunion, support for Rihanna seems to be waning even more.

This is unacceptable.

The idea that someone “deserves” to be beaten is intolerable and appalling. Choosing to use violence in response to conflict—and we emphasize that violence is a *choice*—is the *sole* responsibility of the abuser. Regardless of the circumstances or other factors of the situation, violence and abuse is *never* an acceptable response. Rihanna, or any other victim of violence, is *not* responsible for the violence perpetrated against them, plain and simple.

Rihanna's rumored reunion with Chris Brown does not in any way mean she “wants to be abused.” Reasons for staying in or returning to an abusive relationship are more complex than a statement about the victim's strength of character. For most of us, the decision to end a relationship is one of the most difficult we will ever make. A battered woman's emotional ties to her partner may still be strong, supporting her hope that the violence will end.² Also, it is extremely common for battered women to return to their abuser multiple times before she leaves for good. Gaining strength, relinquishing hope, or letting go of someone we love is very hard and takes time even when violence is not present. Supporting victims of domestic violence in their process and understanding the dynamics of domestic violence is vital to their success and survival. To learn more about domestic violence, please visit these links:

Domestic Violence Facts: [http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet\(National\).pdf](http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet(National).pdf) or www.ncadv.org
Why Doesn't She Just Leave? <http://www.ncadv.org/files/Why%20Doesnt%20She%20Leave.doc>
Men and Domestic Violence: www.acalltomen.org

We hope that Rihanna finds the resources she needs to heal and regain her sense of security and self and encourage everyone to support her in her process. We also hope that Chris Brown is held accountable for his actions and receives support to learn alternatives to violence as a way to deal with conflict in his life.

The mission of NCADV is to organize for collective power by advancing transformative work, thinking, and leadership of communities and individuals working to end the violence in our lives. NCADV believes violence against women and children results from force or threat to achieve and maintain control in intimate relationships as well as from societal abuse of power and domination via sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, anti-Semitism, able-bodyism, ageism, and other oppressions. NCADV recognizes that abuse of power in society can foster battering by perpetuating conditions that condone violence against women and children. To learn more about NCADV, please visit www.ncadv.org.

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¹ Tjaden, Patricia & Thoennes, Nancy. National Institute of Justice and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, *Extent, Nature and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*, (2000).

² *What You Should Know About Domestic Violence*. Retrieved March 4, 2009, from <http://www.caring-unlimited.org/what-you-should-know.html>