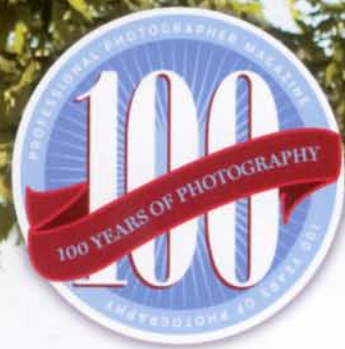


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Marketing to *Women*

If you aren't targeting your *decision makers*,
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"One hundred percent of what we do is based on women because we know she's our buyer."

—Julia Woods, Jeffrey and Julia Woods {Portraitlife}

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Empowering survivors

FARRAH BRANIFF'S PROJECT LETS SURVIVORS SHARE STRENGTH

The statistics regarding sexual assault are staggering. About one in four women and one in six men will be sexually assaulted in his or her lifetime. It's easy to believe that the victims will be other people—people you don't know, not in your family, not in your town. But the fact is sexual assault, molestation and incest happen every day, in every community, to all kinds of people.

Sexual assault survivors are often plagued by a deep sense of shame and feelings of being alone. They feel damaged and humiliated by what has happened to them. They may even blame themselves. Long after the physical trauma has subsided, the psycho-

logical wounds may still haunt the victims.

To combat these feelings, and to empower survivors of sexual assaults, Houston photographer Farrah Braniff launched a portrait program called the Sexual Assault Survivors Project. Braniff, who holds a master's degree in counseling psychology, got involved with sexual assault survivors through her counseling work at the Houston Area Women's Shelter. While working with a sexual assault survivor support group, she was profoundly touched by what she heard. "It was a life-changing experience for me," she says. "Every week, people would come in and share their stories. I kept thinking to myself, 'I wish everyone could hear these

women speak, feel what's going on in this room, and then maybe we could experience a shift in our culture in terms of awareness and the way our society looks at this issue."

Braniff decided to put the message into images. She began photographing the women in the group in settings that are meaningful to them. The survivors chose their expression and posture, usually opting for a look conveying strength and resilience. After her portrait session, each woman wrote a statement to accompany the image. What they had to say ranges from messages of hope to personal stories about their experiences.

"People really respond to the images because the women look powerful and self-assured," says Braniff. "They are survivors, not victims. They are beautiful."

Braniff has displayed the images in various venues around Houston, including the shelter where she met her subjects. She hopes to continue to display the images, and their messages. "My wish is that the project will help empower other survivors," she says.

"There are all these survivors out there thinking they're all alone. Many of them feel ashamed, unattractive and disempowered. When they see these images of women who are the total opposite of all those things, it shows that they, too, can be strong. They can come back from this. If you turn around and face this head on, get some help, you can live a fully realized, authentic life." ■

—Jeff Kent

To learn more about Farrah Braniff and her Sexual Assault Survivors Project, visit www.farahbraniff.com.

Share your good works experience with us by e-mailing Cameron Bishopp at cbishopp@ppa.com