

Newcomb Institute Honored as STAR's 2024 Champion of Change for Transformative Work in Sexual Violence Research

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[Newcomb Institute](#) at Tulane University is a recipient of [Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response's \(STAR\) 2024 Champions of Change award](#). STAR is a leading nonprofit that is dedicated to supporting survivors of sexual trauma, improving systems response, and creating social change to end sexual violence.

STAR's annual Champions of Change awards honor individuals and groups who have shown steadfast dedication, empathy, and support for survivors of sexual assault and trafficking, making a significant impact on their lives. All of the recipients have gone the extra mile in their efforts to continuously promote a culture of healing and empowerment, fight sexual assault, raise awareness, provide essential resources, and advocate for a society free from the stigma and trauma linked to this widespread issue.

“We are honored to be recognized among so many amazing individuals and organizations who are truly agents of change, and this is so much more meaningful to us in that we were nominated by one of our valuable community partners, the Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault,” said [Dr. Anita Raj](#), Executive Director of the Newcomb Institute. “This award validates that Newcomb Institute’s research is making an impact, but more importantly that we are able to work collectively with advocates and providers to make a true difference within our communities.”

Newcomb Institute is a groundbreaking academic center that leads the way in gender equity research and women’s empowerment by contributing evidence for social change and preparing the next generation of gender equity scholars and leaders. In collaboration with academic institutions, policymakers, and civil society organizations, Newcomb Institute advocates for policies and practices that promote gender equity and inclusivity.

“Our research gives us critical insights—not only to better support sexual assault survivors but to advocate for much-needed funding for public health programs

focused on violence prevention with a particular emphasis on youth. Adolescence and young adulthood are stages where we see an alarming rise in violence, and early intervention can make a significant difference,” said Dr. Raj.

Newcomb Institute focuses on three key areas of research and training, including protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights; prevention of gender-based and discriminatory violence; and strengthening feminist civic and community engagement through development of student leaders.



Since 2019, Dr. Raj has been leading survey research on gender-based violence and discrimination in the United States. Initially, she conducted semi-annual statewide surveys in California on physical violence, sexual violence, and intimate partner violence. In 2023, she implemented the Louisiana [Violence Experiences Survey \(LaVEX\)](#).

“This was the first documentation of the prevalence of violence occurring in Louisiana and shows that the majority of adults in the state have faced physical or sexual assaults,” said Dr. Raj. “For women, much of this violence is at the hands of a

romantic or sexual partner, with more than 1 in 10 Louisiana women reporting life-threatening violence from a partner with a gun or other weapon. Sadly, 90% of people who experienced violence never formally reported these assaults.”

In another more recent study, the [2024 #MeToo Report](#) on sexual violence in the U.S., Newcomb Institute found that most women (>80%) have experienced sexual harassment or assault. One in three U.S. women, or over 42 million women, experienced sexual harassment or assault in just the past year. Much of the sexual harassment reported occurs in public spaces. Dr. Raj presented these findings to the Division of Violence Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention Injury Center in an effort to highlight the need for more focused prevention policies.

“Sexual violence, including harassment as well as assault, is ubiquitous, and increases women’s risk for social, economic, and mental health concerns, yet we continue to see these abuses ignored or excused,” Dr Raj said. “Those affected by sexual trauma need to be supported, protected, and respected. With improved public awareness of these issues and an increase in resources to support survivors, we can accelerate progress and create change.”

Newcomb Institute, along with the other award recipients, will be honored at the Champions of Change Gala on Wednesday, November 6, 2024, at the Balcony Ballroom in Metairie, Louisiana.