

## Rise Up Against Abuse Rally

*Draws a passionate and concerned response from hundreds*

**THE FIRST-EVER RISE UP AGAINST ABUSE** Rally was held on the campus of Andrews University from March 7–10, 2019. Sponsored by the Offices of University Wellness and Diversity & Inclusion, this rally was the official launch of the new Rise Up Against Abuse initiative, designed to help people use awareness, education, intervention and prevention to take decisive actions against all forms of abuse.

More than 225 people registered for the three-day rally, which featured numerous abuse survivors, advocates and inspirational presenters. There were also workshops, trainings, presentations and expert panels, as well as a concert, Zumba party, photo exhibition and a Solidarity Wall project.

The rally began Thursday at University Forum with two-time Grammy nominee Sarah Kelly. Kelly sang her well-known “Take Me Away” and shared part of her story as an abuse survivor, detailing how she had poured herself into her music as a way of trying to stay safe and away from her abusive pastor husband.

Following this, attendees were invited to visit the Solidarity Wall, a temporary wall erected outside of the Campus Center for people to write messages of empowerment and support. This was the first time the Solidarity Wall, founded by Ty Gibson, had been brought to an Adventist campus.

On Thursday evening, a photo exhibition

premiere and reception were held for “Unredacted,” a violence against women photo exhibition created by Clarissa Carbungco, senior photography major at Andrews.

The rally continued March 8, International Women’s Day, with a number of presentations by Jennifer J. Schwirzer, a private counselor, writer, TV program host and presenter from Orlando, Florida; Sarah McDugal, Andrews alum, author, speaker and co-founder of Bucket Brigade Against Abuse and WILD (Women in Leadership Development); the Psalm 82 Initiative, a ministry team that helps churches identify and deal with abuse; Judith Fisher, director of the Andrews University Counseling & Testing Center; Nicole Parker, bestselling children’s author and biblical counselor; and Tanya Asim-Cooper, director of the Restoration and Justice Clinic and assistant clinical professor of law at the Pepperdine School of Law.

Proximity Vespers featured Sarah Kelly, who performed again and also shared more of her story. Latoya Wright, an MDiv student, read the story of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13 and told her story of being a victim of sexual abuse and how that impacted her life.

On Sabbath, Sarah McDugal spoke at One Place and Ty Gibson spoke at PMC. That afternoon Gibson and Tacyana Nixon, assistant to the vice president for Campus & Student Life at Andrews, hosted a two part discussion panel.


When the discussion panels concluded, Chris Silber, Emmy-winning writer and filmmaker, and Mekayla Eppers, Mrs. America 2018, spoke of their experiences as survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

Following this special feature, Sarah Kelly and her husband and fellow musician, Jonas Ekman, presented a live concert.

The rally continued Sunday morning with two workshops, “Emancipating Survivors” and “Equipping Defenders” and officially ended with a workshop titled “Preventing LGBT+ Abuse: From Them vs. Us to Us with Them.”

Overall, this event touched many people, including numerous abuse survivors. “In retrospect, I can honestly say that God exceeded our wildest expectations. Every person that He led to be involved in this event, whether through attendance or presentation, brought something unique and vital to each space we occupied during the rally,” said Michael Nixon, vice president for Diversity & Inclusion and cofounder of the Rise Up Against Abuse initiative.

Dominique Gummelt, creator and co-founder of the initiative, was also thrilled with the success of the rally. “People were empowered through knowledge and education, and they were comforted by hugs, prayers and words of encouragement.”

 [Go to http://riseupagainstabuse.com/rally/overview](http://riseupagainstabuse.com/rally/overview) for access to view many of the sessions



**CLOCKWISE, FROM BOTTOM CENTER:** On Sabbath afternoon, two panels addressed questions submitted by attendees ■ “Unredacted” photo exhibition ■ Sarah Kelly, guest speaker for University Forum, which kicked off the Rise Up Against Abuse Rally ■ Sarah McDugal presenting a breakout session in Newbold Auditorium ■ An Andrews student adds a personal message to the Solidarity Wall