



**SERVICE & ADVOCACY PROJECT IDEAS**  
**WHAT WERE YOU WEARING**  
 Dispelling a Myth About Sexual Assault

Supporting Zonta International’s mission to make the world a better place by empowering women through service and advocacy



“Jean shirt, jeans, and Toms. Everyone seems so confused when I tell them this. They can’t understand what I am saying. They can’t understand what I was wearing. It’s almost funny. Almost.”  
 (Outfit inspired by a university student)



Outfit photographed at Zonta Club of Fort Collins display.

**IT IS NEVER OKAY TO BLAME THE VICTIM.**

- IT IS NEVER OKAY TO ASK:
- What were you wearing?
- Were you drinking?
- Why were you there alone?
- Did you scream?
- Did you fight back?

**National Sexual Assault Hotline**  
**1-800-656-4673**

**On-line Chat**  
**online.rainn.org**

Hotline and chat line are run by the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network

**WHAT IS WHAT WERE YOU WEARING?**

This project was originated at the University of Arkansas in 2013 – created by Jen Brockman and Dr. Mary Wyandt-Hiebert. It was inspired by Dr. Mary Simmerling’s poem *What I Was Wearing*. One objective was to provide a visual representation of the poem in order to dispel the common belief that clothing causes sexual violence. It was also hoped that survivors would feel heard, validated, believed, and know that the assault was not their fault.

In preparation of the initial installation, University of Arkansas student survivors volunteered descriptions of what they were wearing when they experienced sexual violence. These descriptions were used to recreate the outfits worn during the assaults. These descriptions are provided with each outfit that is displayed.

A package with the outfit descriptions, the poem, and preferred installation directions are available at the Zonta USA Advocacy website or by contacting [parrishzonta@gmail.com](mailto:parrishzonta@gmail.com).

**HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS PROJECT?**

More than 50 stories were collected as part of the original installation. It is not expected that all will be used in each display. Decide on a representative set of stories and gather the appropriate clothing. The survivor’s description will be provided with each outfit.

The display is best when done in collaboration with a local college or university campus or community victim advocacy center.

Flyers warning that the display may trigger memories for survivors should be posted at access points. Contact information for counseling and / or hotline numbers should be available. Coordinate the display dates with counselors or resource centers.

The display should not be used for financial gain.

The poem *What I Was Wearing* must be displayed with the exhibit.