

*There are sick, evil men lurking in the bushes and violently, sexually attacking innocent "nice girls". There are helpless good guys who are driven to sexual violence by immoral women who lead men on through their suggestive behavior. Rape is an abhorrent crime which everyone is against and society tries (although it is difficult) to curtail. All of these statements sum up the current myths about rape. They are, in fact, myths we have been forced to believe to avoid uncovering the reality of rapists, female behavior and society's efforts. It is necessary to explore the myths and study the reality if we are to begin to fight one of the most violent offenses by men against women.*

Every woman has had terrifying experiences causing her to fear rape. And that fear is a primary factor in controlling her behavior. Recently when going for a walk one evening with some other women, I was struck by two awarinesses: first, how unusual it felt to be walking on the street at night and secondly the total absence of women and the preponderance of men on the street in the evening. The fear of rape has kept us off the streets and behind securely locked doors. While it has immobilized women, men come and go freely and concede to do the things for us we can't do ourselves because of our fears. This freedom for men and immobilization of women is essential for men to maintain control not only of the society in general but of women in particular. Rape is the most common and threatening act calculated to induce fear in all women and thereby the means men have chosen to maintain control of women. In this context, rape has become an institutionalized necessity developed as an effective means to control all women and leave men free to hold power, dominate and control. Rape has the unspoken legitimacy of being institutionalized in this society and as a result men are given license to use women in any way they see fit. Because of the protection afforded to men by a society controlled by men, men become the natural inheritors of the right to rape. But to camouflage the blatancy of this accepted and assumed violence, men take on the role of protector of women which only implies another kind of violence. Men protect women from the violence of men. There are then benefits to men that come with institutionalization of rape-control of women, right to rape, and the role of protector and thereby controller.

The fear of rape not only controls the physical movements of women; the mythologies about rape have been used to try to control women's minds and distort their vision. Women have been psychologically conditioned to believe in what society has defined as their own innate promiscuity. Recently several women were discussing a jury trial of a particular rape case. The discussion led to how the defense attorney is allowed to malign the character of the women to a humiliating and degrading extent. In searching to find a way to prevent this from happening one woman exclaimed "What we need is a jury of our peers." Everyone agreed until moments later

someone realized that it was not the woman who was charged and on trial. Women have been led to believe for so long that they have an uncontrollable sexuality which victimizes men and makes females innately promiscuous—a myth that we must believe at the same time that we believe all women are frigid. These myths are steeped in male concepts of sexuality. Basic to male sexuality is an association between their sexual organs and powers. A good example of this can be seen in the sexual mores surrounding wars past and present which say that men should not have sexual intercourse with a woman before battle because she will rob him of his virility, strength and sense of power. Men still hold on to an irrational fear that women have some mysterious power to subdue their sexuality. This has led them to two simultaneous and contradictory presumptions about women. Not only do they believe out of fear that women are innately promiscuous, but to immobilize the promiscuity they describe the same women as innocent virgins, making the woman something harmless in the mind of the male. Women not only do not make this genital association with power, we often do not understand the fears that men attribute to the power of women. We are constantly traded between two sets of images: one of our raging sexuality and the other of our sweet, pure virginity. And neither apply—our mistake has been to accept and believe their definition of us thereby distrusting ourselves.

It is interesting to note that although men have tried to portray women with a perverted sexual power reflected in their promiscuity, sexual exploitation only goes one way. It is the female body that is used as the subject of pornography for male eroticism and fantasy. It is females who are used as prostitutes by men to serve sexualities which cannot be fulfilled by one woman. It is females who are raped by men. The reverse of these statements does not happen in this society.

But according to the myth of female promiscuity there is no such thing as the "nice girl". The single woman wants to flit from man to man using them to fulfill her sexual needs. The divorced woman wasn't satisfied with one man and has given up the good life to fulfil her innate drives. The married woman is beyond a shadow of a doubt trying to cuckold her husband by having affairs with other men. And the widow isn't content to live with the dignity of happy memories as she buries her husband to begin to tramp after men. By convincing women through these kinds of arguments of their own promiscuous nature men have succeeded in making us believe that if raped we will get only what we deserve and desire. Not only do they think that we all spend all our time craving them, but many men insist that we desire and enjoy rape. This concept may be successfully used to help rapists rationalize their violence but it has no basis in fact. From understanding the myth of the vaginal orgasm and through the research of Masters and Johnson we know that the clitoris is the organ of female eroticism. Most sexual pleasure is derived from manipulating that organ. Anatomically it is separate from the vagina. In the case of rape, violent

thrusting of the penis into the vagina cannot provide the stimulation of the clitoris necessary for sexual pleasure for women. Violent sexual intercourse against the will of the woman cannot be pleasurable to her.

The image of femininity has also served to keep women at the mercy of men. By thinking of ourselves as fragile, delicate creatures we learn to bypass any of the things we could learn for our own physical self defense. And we have been encouraged to dress to fit the fragile image which leaves us with shoes we can barely hobble in no less run with, skirts that either tangle at the ankles or are too tight for moving fast, handbags and all kinds of trappings to prevent movement.

In addition we are taught that our only value is as a sexual object and we are expected to dress accordingly and then are accused of being enticing. These kinds of clothing not only support the image of delicacy and sexual objectification, but actually prevent women from being able to run, kick or move with whatever self-defense measure the situation calls for when being approached by a rapist.

We are used to endless discussions of the character and psychology of women who are victims of rape but part of the protection of the rapist is to taboo much of the discussion of him. Who are rapists? First of all, we must rid ourselves of the notion that all rapists are pathologically sick and perverted men who would qualify for institutionalization for mental derangement. According to a study by Menachem Amir three of five are married and lead normal sex lives at home. They are healthy, young men primarily between the ages of 17 and 30. Studies reveal that men imprisoned for rape are normal people, and we can only conclude that to rape is an accepted part of the definition of a normal male. Rape also does not result from these normal, healthy, young, mostly married men acting on impulse. Amir's study reveals that 90 percent of all rapes were planned. So the rapists cannot be considered as momentarily responding to suggestive behavior of a woman or just flipping out for a minute. Rape is premeditated.

The male role dictates that men have a dual function. They are the rapists and the protectors of women. This dual role mystifies our thinking and tends to make us emphasize their good-guy protector role leaving us as easy prey when they assert their right to rape. Adding to this confusion is the male association between sex and violence. Movies, television and novels as well as everyday life find sexual relationships existing on the same level as street violence.

Rape is forcible intercourse with a non consenting woman. We see ample examples of the violent rape on dark streets. But we tend to overlook the rape of a woman who accepts a date for the

movies and finds that she must pay with her body by the end of the evening forcible and against her will! Or the woman who learns that she must give in to her boss if she is to keep her job-forcible and against her will! Or the gang rapes of women at rock festivals -forcible and against their wills! How many married women are instructed by their husbands, ministers and marriage counselors that they are obliged by law to provide their bodies for the sexual needs of their husbands whether or not they desire intercourse -forcible and against their wills! And to reveal their real status as sexual property, the law protects rapists by upholding that no man can be accused of raping his wife. Who are the rapists? Strangers, friends, work or business associates, dates, boyfriends and husbands.

Men can feel free and uninhibited to force sexual violence onto women as they receive full protection from the law, police and courts. Men know this and therefore understand that limitations are not placed on them in this area. The careful wording of the law with the broad latitude given the defense (rapist) make clear the state's intention to not prosecute rapists.

In Michigan the prosecutor must prove that the rape was forcible and that there was penetration of the vagina. Forcible rape is determined primarily through trying to ascertain if the woman consented or not. Bruises, marks on the body, cuts or gashes all reveal assault but in the eye of the court they do not prove forcible rape and proof must be presented beyond a shadow of a doubt. Thousands of rapists have received acquittals by claiming that the victim had consented. Consent has been defined as everything from inviting the rapist to your apartment as a stall tactic, to not screaming loud enough. Anything a woman does is used against her in court. And therefore there can be no other conclusion than that the courts exist as one part of a giant male conspiracy to allow the maiming and killing (always a potential in rape) of women.

Allowing a male friend into your home who turns violent and rapes you cannot be prosecuted in court. In the eyes of the court, allowing the male into your home implies consent for him to have sexual intercourse with you. The courts apparently see that opening your front door to a man means that the vagina is opened to his penis. As brash and boorish as these conclusions may sound, we must understand that they constitute the thinking of the society and the courts, not of women. It is no chance of fate that one man can visit another in his home, have an argument where the visitor beats up the other man and the beaten man can charge his former friend with assault. Yet a woman who has been raped in her home by a former male friend need not press charges because NO COURT will believe she didn't consent. But if rape was defined as anytime sexual intercourse took place with a woman against her will then husbands, boyfriends and all men who are able to define their woman as their property would be subject to prosecution,

women would be protected and have more freedom of movement and the chains of control would be dealt a heavy blow. It is exactly these things which the police and courts must prevent-not rape.

Here we come to the heart of sexism and its brutal mutilation of women. Now we must ask in all seriousness who is on trial. Women first of all may not do anything to try to prevent the rape such as trying to divert the attention of the man or direct him to a place where there is help for her nor may they do anything to prevent violence to try to save their lives, such as going limp instead of screaming which may provoke more pain for themselves.

The requirement of the courts to prove penetration of the vagina is also established to protect the rapist and further victimize the woman. The only possible way to prove penetration is through examination of the vagina and detection of sperm. There could not be a requirement in all the canons of law with more loopholes in it than this one. What if the rapist didn't have an orgasm? There is no sperm but the vagina was penetrated. What if there was sperm but the woman had sexual intercourse with her consent in 24 hours preceding the rape? If we can't with any reliability determine penetration by examination for sperm, then what about the examination of the vagina. Although penetration may be revealed if the female is a young girl who has had no sexual experience, we know from the scientific data of Masters and Johnson that there is no way to prove penetration in a sexually mature woman unless it is done minutes after intercourse. But because the courts hold on to this requirement, women upon reporting a rape are rushed to emergency of the local hospital where they are initiated into the post-rape humiliation.

The treatment a woman receives after she has been raped indicates clearly that she has stepped out of her place in reporting a rape and asking for justice. The policemen responding to the call provide the first level of harassment. They apparently seek vicarious pleasure from having the woman recount over and over again the details again of the rape when their initial report usually doesn't require the information they are eliciting from the woman. Because the law requires proof of penetration of the vagina the raped woman must be taken by the police to the hospital. Here doctors who also identify with the rapist hold attitudes toward the victimized woman from disinterest to sadism. A woman reported recently that when she arrived at the hospital after being raped and visibly upset, the doctor shook her unmercifully yelling "Shut-up, you bitch!" After all, doctors know the only reason the police bring her there is to check for sperm for evidence for the state.

Doesn't it come down to the fact that what is on trial is the female vagina and it is on trial for simply existing. And now we come to the ultimate conclusion that this society protects rapists because of its insidious contempt for the female and all she represents but most particularly her sexuality.