



16 Days of Activism Day 9

Stop Rape Culture and Victim Blaming

What is Rape Culture?

Rape Culture is an environment in which rape is prevalent and in which sexual violence is normalized and excused in the media and popular culture. Rape culture is perpetuated through the use of misogynistic language, the objectification of women's bodies, and the glamorization of sexual violence, thereby creating a society that disregards women's rights and safety.

Examples of Rape Culture

- Blaming the victim ("She asked for it!")
- Trivializing sexual assault ("Boys will be boys!")
- Sexually explicit jokes
- Tolerance of sexual harassment
- Inflating false rape report statistics -- only 2% of reported rapes are false. This is the same rate of false reporting for other major crimes
- Publicly scrutinizing a victim's dress, mental state, motives, and history
- Gratuitous gendered violence in movies and television
- Defining "manhood" as dominant and sexually aggressive
- Defining "womanhood" as submissive and sexually passive
- Pressure on men to "score"
- Pressure on women to not appear "cold"
- Assuming only promiscuous women get raped
- Assuming that men don't get raped or that only "weak" men get raped
- Refusing to take rape accusations seriously
- Teaching women to avoid getting raped

Victim Blaming

Victim blaming comes in many forms and is often subtle. Any time someone questions what a victim could have done differently to prevent a crime, he or she is participating, to some degree, in the culture of victim blaming. You should not have been drinking." "What were you wearing?" "Was your door even locked?" "Why didn't you just leave?" Not everyone who engages in victim blaming explicitly accuses someone of failing to prevent what happened to them. In fact, in its more understated forms, people may not always realize that they are doing it. Something as simple as hearing about a crime and thinking you would have been more careful had you been in the victim's shoes is a mild form of victim blaming.

Why Is It Dangerous and Unacceptable?

Victim-blaming attitudes marginalize the victim/survivor and make it harder to come forward and report the abuse. If the survivor knows that you or society blames her for the abuse, she will not feel safe or comfortable coming forward and talking to you. Victim-blaming attitudes also reinforce what the abuser has been saying all along; that it is the victim's fault this is happening. **It is NOT the victim's fault or responsibility to fix the situation; it is the abuser's choice.** By engaging in victim-blaming attitudes, society allows the abuser to perpetrate relationship abuse or sexual assault while avoiding accountability for his/her actions. Sexual assault is NEVER the victim's fault. Sexual assault is a violent attack on an individual, not a spontaneous crime of sexual passion. For a victim, it is a humiliating and degrading act. No one "asks" for or deserves this type of

How can men and women combat Rape Culture and Victim blaming?

- Avoid using language that objectifies or degrades women
- Speak out if you hear someone else making an offensive joke or trivializing rape
- If a friend says they have been raped, take your friend seriously and be supportive
- Think critically about the media's messages about women, men, relationships, and violence
- Be respectful of others' physical space even in casual situations
- Let survivors know that it is not their fault
- Hold abusers accountable for their actions: do not let them make excuses like blaming the victim, alcohol, or drugs for their behavior
- Always communicate with sexual partners and do not assume consent
- Define your own manhood or womanhood. Do not let stereotypes shape your actions.
- Be an Active Bystander!

Remember if you are aware of abusive behavior or victim blaming and do not speak out against it, your silence communicates implicitly that you see nothing unacceptable taking place.

WHAT "RAPE CULTURE" MEANS

1 OUT OF 5 AMERICAN WOMEN HAS SURVIVED AN ATTEMPTED OR COMPLETED RAPE. BUT SURVIVORS ARE DOUBTED, SHAMED, AND HARASSED

 <p>Rape cases are not being reported...</p> <p>ONLY A THIRD OF ALL RAPES ARE ACTUALLY REPORTED</p>	 <p>If a survivor does report, police might not investigate.</p> <p>TENS OF THOUSANDS OF RAPE KITS ARE SITTING UNTESTED ACROSS THE U.S.</p>	 <p>Prosecutors often refuse to take up cases that the police DO recommend.</p> <p>FEWER THAN 4 IN 10 CASES ARE EVER PROSECUTED</p>
 <p>If a rape case does go to trial, survivors are often re-traumatized by the process.</p> <p>DEFENSE ATTORNEYS OFTEN BLAME AND SHAME SURVIVORS ON THE STAND</p>	 <p>People think rape survivors are making it all up.</p> <p>6% OR LESS OF CHARGES MAY BE FALSE, BUT STUDENTS THINK UP TO 50% OF RAPE REPORTS ARE FABRICATED</p>	 <p>And even if a rapist is convicted, he can receive an extraordinarily light sentence</p> <p>ONLY 3% OF RAPISTS SPEND EVEN A DAY IN JAIL</p>

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