RAPE
Rape is forced, unwanted sexual intercourse. Rape is about power, not sex. People who have been raped need care, comfort, and a way to heal.
When it comes to rape and Sexual violence against women, we are all like "Yeah, the same old problem" and I believe that the very same problem is the way we approach an issue like Rape.

It's not like any other cultural issue. In fact it's a crime still undiscovered by law although it's ruled as one of the crimes against human beings. Every moment in our lives, girls— and boys— are being raped without even being aware of what is happening to them. Every day, women in and out of their houses are being sexually abused by other or their very own partners. And still, we are like "Yeah, the same old problem".

It is not something new but it doesn't have to be something modernized either, rape and being raped.

It's not something natural and it doesn't have to be a driving force, rape and being raped.

It's not something funny and it's not to be made fun of, rape and being raped.

It's never late to make a change this big if we start changing small pieces of our world. Let's start from our heads. Let's change the way we look at Rape.

Elaheh Zohrevandi
December 2011
Rape

Statistics

44% of victims are under age 18
80% are under age 30

Every 2 minutes, someone in the U.S. is sexually assaulted
Each year, there are about 213,000 victims of sexual assault

60% of sexual assaults are not reported to police
15 of 16 rapists will never spend a day in jail

Approximately 2/3 of assaults are committed by someone known to the victim
38% of rapists are a friend or acquaintance
When the Media Rapes a Victim

Featured News

The Auxerre Affairs in France has been the earliest reported rape in the media. A trial that was called up, later on was reported to have been ‘quickly suspended,’ as rape was then as local newspapers referred to it— ‘violence like any other’.

The year was 1773. The tone of the media then can be observed as one that sided with the reigning ‘cultural sensibilities’ at that time. Violent acts against women were very often dismissed (especially in scenarios where a slave girl was raped by her master) and most often not even reported, as a ‘stolen virgin’ was a social goner even if she was the victim.

Today, no rape stories are missed out— in fact, the media tries to feature almost every rape or attempt at sexual violence. Sadly enough, many of these rape stories are reported with such frenzy that it provokes a sense of public excitement that, very often, that does more harm than benefit to the victim.

To say or not to say

Media reporting on rapes have been the cause of much debate, especially, in the recent past where most rape cases are portrayed to increase readership/TRPs by creating shock/ awe rather than reported in a matter of fact way. Rape differs from the other types of crimes. There is an element of social ostracism; irrespective how forward looking the country is believed to be. This ideally means that reporting a rape should be done with a lot of care. Unfortunately, it isn’t so.

In Asian and African countries, this mindset is all the more deep-rooted as all aspects have a cultural, social and/or religious angle to it. In many cases, a woman who has been raped is accused of being a perpetrator rather than made to feel like a victim. What was appalling, in some reports, is that the media too, would take the ’she-asked-for-it’ sentiment, while reporting rape cases.

"In a socially conservative state, a rape victim is often encouraged to suicide to save her honor."
When the Media Rapes a Victim

A classic example was the famous Suryanelli gang rape case that took place in 1996 in Kerala, India, when a 16 year old girl was enticed, abducted and gang raped repeatedly for 40 days by 42 men, including influential politicians, businessmen and other prominent persons at various places in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

The virtually unknown tiny village of Suryanelli in Idukki district, Kerala, soon became notorious with this case, thanks to the thousands of newspapers that carried the news of this gang rape on the minor. Soon, in the pretext of getting justice, the media and the police paraded the minor and her parents.

Disgustingly enough, some of the not-so-well-known newspapers and news channels also took the liberty to report the case with an amorous edge so as to entice the viewers or to get a hike on their TRPs.

Finally, after a grueling 315 days of trial and despite the public pressure, some of the accused were let off with minor sentences while others were given life imprisonment. Yet for the victim, the torture did not end there.

In this case, the victim’s identity, her parent’s identity, residing address were all callously splashed across the channels and newspapers. Also, the victim and her parents’ lack of awareness or understanding were fully misused by the media to reveal details about themselves.

As a result, days after the verdict, the girl’s parents appealed to the public and the media to finally allow them to lead a normal life. But in a socially conservative state like Kerala (where a rape victim is often encouraged to suicide to save her honor), this was naturally too much to ask for. Finally, after suffering humiliation from the masses for more than a decade and unable to stand up to the jeers and taunts anymore, the family sold off their house and relocated to another district couple of years ago.

This is a classic example of ‘pulp reporting’ by the media where sheer sensationalism of the whole incident made normal life a living hell for the victims later on.

Saying it right

The media being a key disseminator of knowledge—a large percentage of the population solely depend on it for facts and media reports can influence public opinion at large, and even impact criminal case outcomes. In particular, media representations of rape and sexual assault can affect the legal response to such cases on multiple levels.

Therefore, it is imperative that the media not only objectively report individual cases of rape, but also that they accurately represent research findings on rape and sexual assault.

The British Psychological Society (BPS) recently announced the findings from a presentation that was to be given at the Division of Forensic Psychology’s annual conference.
When the Media Rapes a Victim

The study, entitled "Personality characteristics, sexual behaviors and perceptions of women: Examining the factors that affect male propensity to commit acquaintance rape" (Shaw & Flowe, 2009), aimed to determine whether specific personality traits, sexual activities and aggressive behaviors were characteristic of men who would coerce a woman to engage in sexual activity against her will.

Based on the BPS press release, The Daily Telegraph issued an article, both in print and online. The Telegraph headline stated ‘Scientists say women who drink alcohol, wear short skirts and are outgoing are more likely to be raped’. The results described in the headline were contrary to the study’s findings. The focus of the study, and the attendant BPS press release, was on male behaviors and personality characteristics, a point that was not mentioned in the Telegraph’s report. Interestingly, the focus of the Telegraph article was on the behavior of the hypothetical woman, rather than on the behavior of the male participants who took part in the study. This in a mainstream newspaper!

Perhaps the so-called ‘spin’ of the Telegraph’s article provides an indication of a more systemic problem, whereby people have a tendency to scrutinize the victim’s behavior to determine whether the victim precipitated the attack. The public relies on the print media to fill the gaps in their experiential knowledge. Media is the fastest medium of spread of attitude and a very important influencer. Newspaper articles that portray the rape victims’ behavior in a negative light may reinforce rape myths and fuel public misconceptions of sex crimes. This in turn may have negative consequences for a victim’s self-conceptions of his or her experience, society’s behavior towards the victim and her family, and the criminal justice’s response to sex crimes.

The media has the power to positively influence public opinion in a manner that can encourage victims to report rape. Greer (2003) noted that there has been a substantial reduction in the use of stranger-danger terminology regarding female rape articles in the dailies between 1985 and 1997. Coinciding with this reduction in stereotypical portrayals of rape by the media, female rape victims in recent years have been reporting acquaintance rape to the police at an increasing rate (Marhia, 2008). It is imperative that the media continues to portray rape in a representative light because so doing may encourage additional victims to come forward to demand justice.

With a large portion of the population dependant on the media for both the news of the day and general factual knowledge, both researchers and journalists must take extreme care to report findings accurately. When it comes to a sensitive and potentially inflammatory topic such as rape, some journalists seem to seek to create the biggest splash, which can often come at the expense of the truth. However, they, like researchers, have a responsibility beyond simply drawing attention to their writings; they must maintain their integrity by reporting facts correctly.

1 A history of rape: sexual violence in France from the 16th to the 20th century
2 Media and rape: School of Psychology, Forensic Section, University of Leicester
Love Me 'till the End

A True Story

Soheila opens the door with a wide, welcoming smile and it's easy to see why she's so popular at Kanoun, an Organization for troubled women and children in downtown Tehran, where she works as a counselor. She laughs uproariously when I complain about my husband and blushes while talking about her fiancé. It's difficult to imagine that beneath the cheerful veneer, Soheila hides a story that spans years of abuse and betrayal. Some of the things she tells me make my skin crawl. But the one thing that Soheila won't let me feel for her is pity. Because she hasn't given up on the Afghanistan judiciary and knows that one day she's going to see her rapists behind bars.

Feisty and strong, she displays no misplaced guilt or shame, has no qualms about being photographed and telling the world what she went through. Soheila refuses to be punished for being a victim. "If I hadn't found Kanoun, my life would be very different. I'm thankful that I was given the chance to reshape my destiny."

Sadly after death of her mother, moving to her grandparents' house did not help to alleviate the trauma that young Soheila had gone through. "Nightmares were a part of life. I constantly woke up to the scene of my mother's death playing in my head," Soheila says. She attended school but found it very difficult to cope. Her grandparents hired a tutor to help Soheila focus on her studies. But things took a horrible turn when her tutor, an elderly man, started molesting her. The abuse continued until Soheila graduated from school.

I ask her why she never said a thing in all the years of abuse. "I get that a lot. But you don't understand what the situation is like in villages and small towns. Initially, all I felt was shock. I didn't know what was happening to me. All I knew was that it didn't feel right," She explains. "Complaining was not an option because I knew there was no one to support me. I was not the only one. Girls are regularly exploited by village elders, uncles, cousins and neighbors. It's almost a rite of passage when you reach puberty."

On the morning of April 19, Soheila's cousin told her that he'd gotten her an interview with a government official and took her to a resort for the interview. At the resort, Soheila was offered a drink that made her feel sick. "Everything after that happened in a haze. But I remember being taken to a room, thrown on the bed, stripped and raped. Once the 'government official' had had his fun, four more raped me as I lay there, drugged and paralyzed. My cousin was one of them. I was bleeding, in excruciating pain and numb with shock."

After a week of battling with Anxiety and body infection, Soheila stepped out of the house and took a walk downtown. On her way, she saw her then-roommate and shared her story with her. "Fortunately or not, she had the same experience and we both filled a report the very same day against the rapists."

"After 18 months I was asked to appear in court for the first hearing. It is still a very slow and tedious process. In Iran the courts aren't women-friendly at all and I had to face a lot of humiliation during the trial. But every bit of the humiliation will be worth it if those men are put behind bars."

Soheila is now engaged to an MBA student and the two will tie the knot soon. The couple intends to fight the case till Soheila's rapists are punished.
She reveals an image that you would never see, unless you watch her carefully without that veneer.

"Victims are best equipped to counsel other victims of rape because they can empathize with them. When victims find out that their counselors have shared a similar experience, they feel accepted and find it easier to talk to them. This helps them deal with their trauma better", says clinical psychologist, Dr. Salavati
The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo

A Book/Movie review

It's almost rare that you could find a book saying the same story of its film adaptation but The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo is an exception. After reading the English version of the book, I started seeing people with the book in their handbags everywhere. Grandmothers, bros, feminists, highschoolers, businessmen and nerds all had positive reaction to this psychological suspense. Then I started seeing the characters in the society.

The story is not romantic though it involves sex. The characters are neither perfect nor beautiful. They are quirky, smart and interesting and that's exactly who real people are. I was really intrigued by their twisted minds and unstable personalities. The elements of the book/movie are horrifying yet educational. The novel is not a mystery or detective book in the typical sense. Honestly, as someone who is taught to think like a machine, I was a bit off when I found that the novel didn't have a single general theme. Some critics have categorized the whole story as "Victims seeking revenge" but I find that far from being real. When Slander's new guardian turns out to be a brutal sadist, or when Blomkvist reveals Martin's rape murders you are convinced that this novel is not just a pretty face.

I want to save the best for last: Lisbeth Slander, a brilliant character, 85 pound anorexic bisexual Goth with tattoos, piercings and a magical photographic memory who does top-line freelancing detective work and is the best hacker in all Europe. She can't function well in society, or that's what the courts says, or open up to trust people due to being traumatically abused in the past. She is indifferent to brutal images of tortured, mutilated and murdered women in the film but she is more sensitive than we think she is. She seeks justice. Lisbeth teaches her new abusive guardian the last lesson and gives the mass murderer the lesson of his life, at the final moment of his. I'm not encouraging revenge or indifference; in fact I'm analyzing the whole concept of Rape Causes Rage and Mental Issues. I chose this film because it pictures two types of victims: ones who run away, Harriot, and the ones who stand up and with all the physical and psychological problems, fight for a normal life. The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo had effects on me, I realized that building a new life and forgetting about past experiences in not something easy to gain in life but learning from it works.
Is There a Responsibility to Protect Congo?

Over the past few years, one thing has become clear in foreign policy. When a people find themselves in a predicament where they are oppressed and deprived of their rights, external help comes to them sometimes, from other states in the world. Sometimes, this help comes in the form of intervention using military force, although technically forbidden by law. It legitimizes itself through the epithet of “Responsibility to protect”, or R2P.

The Responsibility to Protect has evolved as an important doctrine of sorts in contemporary international relations. The principle, endorsed in 2005 during the UN World Summit, essentially calls on the international community to use all “appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means ... to help protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.” This responsibility to protect is proactive and continuous.

But strangely, the world has been stunningly silent in questioning the non-invocation of the doctrine to handle the situation in DR Congo. The international community has the same responsibility to protect the people of DR Congo- over 6 million civilians have died, and statistics reveal that as many as half of the death toll comprise children. It has been a whole 15 years since this horrific scheme of events began. Over 400,000 women have been raped. As mentioned by the American Journal of Public Health, on an average, 48 women are raped per hour in DR Congo, and the toll of women who were victims of sexual violence in 2007, toll up to about 4,000,000. Women are afraid to speak up, to speak out and to be heard. Elections are held from time to time, but women are afraid to participate for fear of being subjected to horrors for their campaigns of denouncing the horrific sexual violence that is being perpetrated by and large in the region.

Is this because the world is too apathetic to the situation? Or is this because the world has decided to remain indifferent? Today, DR Congo stands in a precarious condition- where the crisis has gone far beyond the threshold of a turnaround. The situation has spiralled out of control. The people of DR Congo are paying the price for the inertia that the world wielded in its conduct towards the country.

The state is abundantly rich in mineral resources. Better known to the world as conflict minerals, these resources are mined by DR Congolese civilians, who often work with their bare hands. The monetary return for them is frugal, though the plundering corporations and governments ramble about in wealth. The sword of rape and death hang above the heads of the ordinary DR Congolese civilian, while the world around them uses laptops and cell phones fashioned out of industries that use these conflict minerals.
Is There a Responsibility to Protect Congo?

DR Congo’s present state of instability easily benefits those who exploit its wealth. Documentation and statistical records maintained by the United Nations suggests the massive exploitation of DR Congo’s mineral wealth by Rwanda, Uganda, various rebel groups and private actors. Specifically, in its 2001 Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, its 2006 Resolution 1653 and 2008 Final Report of the Group of Experts, the United Nations has explained the fact that Rwanda’s economic power in the region has a lot to do with the trade in illicit minerals out of DR Congo.

To DR Congo, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ICCPR and ICESCR, the Geneva Conventions and all of International Humanitarian Law, truly, make no difference and do not matter at all. There is precious little that a legal document could serve for the people, when it is devoid of any form of political will or military power backing it up. What use is empty rhetoric when implementation is severely lacking? Rehabilitating the destroyed state is going to take a lot, easily. DR Congo is fragile, and cannot be strengthened unless it can give its people their basic needs and protection. This cannot take place until DR Congo has a unified army that remains confined to the rubric of discipline, and remains subjugated to a civilian rule. The army must necessarily be comprised of individuals who conform to a value system, and must necessarily be rid of those who are guilty of human rights abuses. There should be a military tribunal that would mandate the performance of duties on part of the army, and would keep the army confined within the borders of decency and good conduct.

With this, DR Congo could have a proper government in place, one that would proactively engage in the upkeep of its people by ensuring them their dues, in keeping with international standards. On a larger scale, DR Congo must compulsorily indulge in regional diplomacy with all stakeholders to usher in peace. Rwanda must be pressurized for the return of its refugees, and offer political space for the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda. DR Congolese mineral wealth must rightfully benefit the people in DR Congo, and all policy must look towards this direction. It doesn’t help that the minerals benefit only corporations and governments outside, for the present, so it is necessary that those who loot these resources need to be made accountable on all fronts.
Do You Suffer From RTS?

Rape Trauma Syndrome (RTS) was identified by Ann Wolbert Burgess and Lynda Lytle Holmstrom in the mid-seventies after studying the typical patterns of rape survivors. RTS describes a process that rape survivors go through in response to the fear experienced during a sexual assault. Although each survivor has their own experience, there are common characteristics some survivors possess. These characteristics are the direct result of the profound fear inherent in sexual assault.

The words "the scene of the crime" speak volumes in criminal investigations and movies. In the case of sexual assault, despite where the event occurred, the scene of the crime is the body itself. The body then becomes less of a vessel for the spirit, and more of an enemy always reminding them of what they long to forget. Resolution of the sexual assault requires the body to be empowered. Forming a loving relationship between survivors and their bodies will enhance their ability to care for themselves as well as live with less anger and fear.

During a traumatic experience, the body turns into a different creature, one who of which better equipped to handle the situation. An assault at this level is then captured by this "creature inside" who holds onto it to protect the individual from having to deal with such an emotional upheaval. Although its intentions are noble, it can only hold on to so long. Eventually, the memories and feelings start leaking out, causing the body to remember what the mind has forgotten.

The results are body-based symptoms which may not be recognized by the survivor as having a root in the assault. Survivors may have increased complaints long after the original assault. These complaints may come in the form of gastrointestinal problems, migraines, or chronic pain. Sexual problems may also occur such as pain during intercourse.
• If you have experienced the worst or just think you suffer from the aftermath of a traumatic past, do the quick checklist below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Not at all (1)</th>
<th>A little bit (2)</th>
<th>Moderately (3)</th>
<th>Quite a bit (4)</th>
<th>Extremely (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repeated, disturbing memories, thoughts, or images of a stressful experience from the past?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeated, disturbing dreams of a stressful experience from the past?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeated, disturbing dreams of a stressful experience from the past?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeated, disturbing dreams of a stressful experience from the past?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having physical reactions (e.g., heart pounding, trouble breathing, or sweating) when something reminded you of a stressful experience from the past?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid thinking about or talking about a stressful experience from the past or avoid having feelings related to it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid activities or situations because they remind you of a stressful experience from the past?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble remembering important parts of a stressful experience from the past?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of interest in things that you used to enjoy?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling distant or cut off from other people?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling emotionally numb or being unable to have loving feelings for those close to you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling as if your future will somehow be cut short?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble falling or staying asleep?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling irritable or having angry outbursts?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having difficulty concentrating?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being “super alert” or watchful on guard?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling jumpy or easily startled?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possible scores range from 17 to 85. A cut-off of 50 is a good predictor of a RTS/PTSD.
She Had It Coming

Some comments on ‘rape culture’

As a regular netizer, I frequently receive event notifications, news updates, and invitations from people who know other people. Two weeks ago, I ran into a friend’s feed saying that she would join an event called “la marcha de las putas” (the SlutWalk). Knowing my friend as I do, instantly felt curiosity and look into it. My research took me to, among others, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Costa Rica, U.K, and now Peru where some of their citizens marched against gender sexual violence.

The SlutWalk first appeared in Canada reacting to the advice given by a local police officer, during a crime prevention forum held in Toronto. “Women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not be victimized”, he said and became famous (perhaps not in his best interest, considering his later apologies on his wording). I followed the walk in Lima; civilians (women, men and children) took the streets for about 3 hours chanting for respect and remarking that “no means no”.

Whether or not this campaign is controversial¹, I found its message quite compelling. The London’s SlutWalk slogan -“don’t get raped rather than don’t rape“- summarizes it perfectly. In today’s world we still find a strong (and incomprehensive) attitude facing rape or other gender aggressions as a “she had it coming” situation.

The discourse in which sexual violence is normalized, excused or justified is what some authors –especially in the EE.UU- recognize as part of the ‘rape culture’. Examples of such are ¹) the trivialization of sexual assault as a matter of gender (i.e.: "men are weak to temptation"), and ii) when communities, media, or family members blame the victim of provoking the attack, just like the police officer in Canada did. According to the experts, there are more subtle ways of perpetuating this so-called culture, such as sexist-jokes, tolerance to sexual harassment, publicity (and arts) exaggerating women’s dress or mental state (such as calling a woman promiscuous because of the way she talks or walks), defining gender based on sexual promiscuity (such as promoting boys to “score” more and women not to), and so on.

¹ The SlutWalk has been criticized for: the use of the word “slut”, its branding or its communication strategies.
When reading some of the existing material on the subject, questions kept on coming to my head. ‘Rape culture’ is a fixed situation? Is it the aftermath of a particular society, environment, religion or culture? What makes the difference between an exaggeration and an exaltation of any of these activities or behaviors? On this note, recent accusations to Facebook about promoting rape culture have opened the discussion on freedom of speech and the respect of women rights. The popular site first decline on pulling the controversial pages (the "What's 10 inches and gets girls to have sex with me? My knife" and "If I wanted you to open your mouth I would have dropped my pants" are among the less offensive according to my personal point of view). Early this month, Facebook decided to pull some of these pages but many remain.

Facebook is not alone on this controversy. I was astonished seeing a great number of renowned media networks and journals using similar expressions of the ‘rape culture’. Just to cite an example, earlier this year, a case of gang rape occurred in Cleveland (EE.UU) where an eleven year girl was raped by 18 young boys. The New York Times article reproduced opinions of some members of their community expressing their concerns on the future of those boys, stating: “It’s just destroyed our community; these boys have to live with this the rest of their lives.” Others, referred to the girl’s mother preconceive role: “Where was her mother? What was her mother thinking? How can you have an 11-year-old child missing down in the Quarters?” According to Ray B. Williams, there was also a Fox news report emphasizing interviewers opinion on how her appearance drawn the boys into the attack, and a Houston Chronicle article analyzing the girl's Facebook profile looking for evidence on her “seductive conduct”.

I would like to answer some of my questions. For that, I have the feeling that I have to take many steps back. I spent some time researching on the definition of rape, before even looking for available data (because the latter will depend on the first one), in order to clarify my thoughts.

Rape definitions vary from institutions and countries. The United Nations (UN) defines it as “sexual intercourse without valid consent”; the World Health Organization (WHO) defines it as “physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration – even if slight – of the vulva or anus, using a penis, other body parts or an object.” While some countries are using more inclusive definitions (i.e.: Germany and Rwanda), others (i.e.: Switzerland or Brazil) continue to frame acts where penile penetration into a vagina are the only ones considered as rape; leaving out men victims, as well as other forms of sexual aggressions.

Recently, a FBI panel voted to update its definition for the first time since 1929. The panel’s recommendation is to go from “the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will” to “penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.” Under the current definition, rape against men isn’t considered as such; for the bureau, they qualified as sexual assaults which mean not only a different consideration of the crime but a different value of the penalty.

These regulations give us an idea of what the panorama looks like around the world. Not every country has the same framework on this crime. “Better educated” societies keep an outdated description on a global concern. This is not a matter of developing-versus-developed economies, or religious standards, or a fixed cultural stigma. Rape and its ‘culture’ don’t seem to discriminate on maps, race, or other paradigms. Civilizations have given its own value to the matter and chosen to regulate it according to their local standards. Sadly for many, this has no necessarily correlation with reality. If so, this would mean that the law does not respond to modernity.
Yet, what ‘rape culture’ seems to point out is that further than legislation, people need to understand respect to human rights and this might be an in-home learning experience.

In 1993, the UN Commission on the Status for Human Rights (Resolution 46) condemned all forms of violence directed against women. In the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, Governments declared that the United Nations system and Member States should work towards the elimination of violence against women in public and private life, of all forms of sexual harassment, exploitation and trafficking in women, of gender bias in the administration of justice, and of any conflicts arising between the rights of women and the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices, cultural prejudices and religious extremism. In addition, there has been extensive literature on rape as a weapon of war whenever armed conflicts arise between different parties.

Nonetheless, physical, sexual and psychological violence occurs mostly in the family environment, according to the data provided by the UN and the WHO reports; acts including sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence, and violence related to exploitation.

Whereas some authors say that the ‘rape culture’ premise is by itself sexist and even damaging to its cause, I believe that a general understanding beyond branding must be achieved. I am glad to see that efforts are been made worldwide to incorporate violent conducts into the legal system. However, I am still alarmed to see new generations been brought to bullying situations in which the solution for them is to “man up” or “expose less”, or be aware of the consequences. I would like to confirm that we have outgrown made-up-phrases commonly said in times of my grandparents and see, just like I have in other human rights, an honest commitment to awareness and development.

---

2 The United Nation states this definition on: “Convictions by Type of Conviction, Sex, Country and Year”, Database of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and on “Rape at the National Level, number of police recorded offenses (2003-2008)” data.

A Lionheart’s Poem

There will come a day I will suffer no more
No nightmares, no sweaty fingertips at nights
In the dark I move like a whore
Just to memorialize my useless fights
The fights to reach that damned door
To unfasten my wrists, my thighs
To scream my fears out, to shout from my core
To make everyone hear my cries

Clang, clang! I’m thirty four
I’m no kid, no “moving lizard” no more
Bang, bang! I’m here to make you see
What you did made me who I now happen to be
Old, crippled, silly and undone
You’re waiting for your nightmares to be gone
Who would have thought I would stay
Watching your vitals every single day
Who would have imagined you
My dad, my everything, would be cruel

Nobody cares about this tiny mess
I walk around pretending I’m someone else
Maybe I was a bore or just a silly little kid
Was that why you did what you did

There will come a day
That I will be okay
I would rise like the glamorous sun
Shine on and talk like a shooting gun
Fierce and strong, loud and tough
Small and quick but effective and rough
I’d bring you and people like you down
I would leave no nastiness in this town
What you did, what they did, what will be done
Would never be forgotten or forgiven by the one

“I WOULD RISE LIKE THE GLAMOROUS SUN.”
Loving Your Abuser and Stockholm syndrome

On August 23rd, 1973 two machine-gun carrying criminals entered a bank in Stockholm, Sweden. Blasting their guns, one prison escapee named Jan-Erik Olsson announced to the terrified bank employees "The party has just begun!" The two bank robbers held four hostages, three women and one man, for the next 131 hours. The hostages were strapped with dynamite and held in a bank vault until finally rescued on August 28th.

After their rescue, the hostages exhibited a shocking attitude considering they were threatened, abused, and feared for their lives for over five days. In their media interviews, it was clear that they supported their captors and actually feared law enforcement personnel who came to their rescue. The hostages had begun to feel the captors were actually protecting them from the police. One woman later became engaged to one of the criminals and another developed a legal defense fund to aid in their criminal defense fees. Clearly, the hostages had "bonded" emotionally with their captors.

While the psychological condition in hostage situations became known as "Stockholm Syndrome" due to the publicity – the emotional "bonding" with captors was a familiar story in psychology. 1

Every syndrome has symptoms or behaviors, and Stockholm syndrome is no exception. While a clear-cut list has not been established due to varying opinions by researchers and experts, several of these features will be present:

- Positive feelings by the victim toward the abuser/controller
- Negative feelings by the victim toward family, friends, or authorities trying to rescue/support them or win their release
- Support of the abuser’s reasons and behaviors
- Positive feelings by the abuser toward the victim
- Supportive behaviors by the victim, at times helping the abuser
- Inability to engage in behaviors that may assist in their release or detachment

The victims' need to survive is stronger than her impulse to hate the person who has created his dilemma. The victim comes to see the captor as a 'good guy', even a savior.

In many culture where keeping quiet and swallowing is more common, being intimidated equals anticipating your horrifying situation. It's not proved but is a rather accepted fact that evolution of mental behavior among human beings is rarely related to survival of a single person. In a community in which speaking out is a taboo rather than being a moving act, if the victim bonds with the abuser, she can convince her unconscious that there's nothing wrong with everything done to her. This way, the person thinks about suicide less often and doesn't feel abandoned by the surroundings.

Rape victims assume that the abuser is a good man whose actions stem from problems that she can help him solve. Both feel fear, as well as love, compassion and empathy toward a rapist who has shown them any kindness. Any acts of kindness by the rapist will help ease the emotional distress they have created and will set the stage for emotional dependency of Counterproductive Victim Responses.

The only problem here is that with all the means of exchanging ideas, opinions and ethics, these days there's not going to be a certain boundary for people and especially victims who unintentionally seek help without noticing. Regardless of the gender of the victims and the place where they live, accepting "who you are" is not accepting "what has been done to you" anymore. Surviving does not mean living and reproducing as it's defined in biological texts. The world is moving towards spreading your "peace of mind" rather than your "piece of mind".

Developing such disorders might be as common as developing abusive behavior. As long as women keep bearing abusive behavior and like the fact that they are victims rather than powerful divas, this planet doesn't make her peace with humans.
"A black horse and a white house
No love, a new name with a spouse
The girl in the other room
Is now a woman with no groom"

Sings Soqra, a rape victim who suffers from a lifetime of abuse before and after marriage and even now that she's a widow.
Biography

Our Article of The Month was written by Katherine R. Vásquez Tarazona. Originally from Peru, Katherine is a global citizen. Attorney with a master in International Relations, she is keen on development and international cooperation.
Biography

Our Picture of The Month was taken by Iranian artist, Effat Allahyari. Effat has two sons and after she has finished university, she travels and takes pictures for the fun of it. She thinks her magic is in her powerful sense of understanding people from all around the world.

Delta Women

“SEE YOUR TRUE BEAUTY AND POWER.”

Deltawomen is a non-profit (NGO) organization, dedicated to impacting the lives of the Delta state women worldwide. Deltawomen is committed to empowering women, strengthening families and transforming their communities in the process.