

Real Rape: What Nobody's Telling You

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He ignored me. He betrayed me. He broke me into a million pieces. It was as if someone had cut me open, slashed deeply into each of my organs and stitched me back up again to live a nightmare-bleeding from the inside out. I didn't know I had become a statistic for a crime that you never hear about.

We, as a society, hear the word rape and picture a woman being attacked in a dark alley by some drifter. We, as media-educated drones, envision a college co-ed going to a party and being assaulted by a gang of frat boys. We, as women, imagine some sicko holding a knife to our throats to get what he wants. Is that rape? You bet. But, all those scenarios account for only about 28%* of rapes in America.

That leaves 72%* of rapes that don't fit the stereotype. Huh? How can we not know what most rapes are like? That doesn't make any sense. What we know as rape isn't the majority. Why? How can it be that so many rapes committed aren't what we know rape to be? No one wants to talk about real rape. No one wants to put it out there for discussion. No one wants to admit that our society has a large majority of rapes that are unspeakable, let alone unthinkable. Or even worse, society just doesn't think the majority is as bad as the stereotype. If that's the case, we're dead wrong-every last one of us.

Real rape doesn't have to be physically violent. Only 5%** of completed rapes result in serious physical injury. So if the rapist didn't hurt them, how'd they get raped? Most rapes involve much more deceptive tactics to achieve the 'final goal.' The victim is pressured, coerced, manipulated and even tricked (lied to) into doing the will of the predator, even when they don't want to and say no. The tactics can vary, but we've all heard them voiced in society, "I talked her into it"; "I wore her down"; and the infamous "No means Yes." There is no such thing as 'convincing' someone to have sex. While I hate to use the cliché, it's puts it bluntly-No means No.

Real rape doesn't have to be committed by a stranger. A staggering 80%* of rapes are carried out by someone you know. That means that your assailant is your husband, boyfriend, friend, relative or co-worker. The authorities call it acquaintance rape, but its real rape, plain and simple. Your attacker will know you and everything about you. They'll know what to say and do to get what they want. Some might say this kind of rape isn't as bad, since you know your rapist, but that's a load of you-know-what. Studies show that rape by an acquaintance has more far-reaching psychological effects and symptoms than stranger rape. I mean, just imagine it. Someone you love or care about, committing such a heinous act upon you against your will. How can that not mess you up?

You won't even know it happened. I was raped last fall. My rape was not the deviant jumping from the bushes; it didn't occur in some dorm room either. It was someone who was supposed to be a "friend" and it happened in my own home. I wasn't beaten within an inch of my life, I wasn't beaten at all. I had all the preconceived ideas about rape that most of us carry. So I didn't think it was rape.

Taking advantage of my vulnerability during a separation from my husband, he invaded my life. He started ogling me and making comments that made me uncomfortable. I told him to knock it off, but he just ignored me. I became accustomed to his behavior. He started isolating me from everyone; making up things "said" about me. It made me feel so betrayed, so alone. I felt like I couldn't talk to anyone anymore. I even felt my own mother didn't love me after he was done with his destruction of my self-esteem.

He pushed and pushed until he got what he wanted. I said 'No' and 'Stop' but this did not deter him. I cried while it happened but he didn't care. I pushed him off of me, but he just kept going. Afterward, I locked myself in the bathroom and cried even more. He made me feel like I was overreacting, being 'dramatic.' He insulted me and cracked jokes. He laughed it off. He had me convinced that I made the choice to have sex with him, that it was a 'mistake' I had made, so I didn't think it was rape.

Approximately 73%*** of rape victims don't identify their rapes until much later. It took me four months to call it rape. It wasn't until I spoke of it in its entirety that I knew. Hearing

the words flickering off my tongue, floating in the air, vibrating off my ears and piercing into my heart forced me to see. It was a rape I'd never seen in a movie, I'd never read about in a magazine, I'd never knew existed. It was a rape I could have never imagined with my prior media-educated ideas on the subject. It was a rape staring me dead on in the face screaming to be heard. It was my rape and it was real rape.

It didn't have happen that way. I could have known what to look for, how to know when a situation has gone from bad to worse. I could have been educated, warned, something-anything. But I wasn't, most of us aren't. We buy the stereotypes and the preconceived notions the media sells us. But we don't have to. We can make a difference. I can make a difference. Telling my story, one year later, is like reliving each horrifying moment, but I need to do it. I couldn't stop him from destroying me that night, but maybe I can empower someone else to stand up and be heard when they say 'NO.'

* Statistics from rainn.org

**Statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice

***Statistics from turningpointsservices.org

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