
We Cannot Afford to Ignore Rape Culture

Introduction

By definition, "Rape culture" is an environment in which rape is not only pervasive but also trivialised due to societal attitudes regarding gender and sexuality (Waweru Nduta, 2018). Although the term came about recently, this immoral pattern of ignorance reflects on an already existing custom that predates to the colloquial time. Rape culture is present in our nation like cutlery in a house and has intensely increased over the years. Reports of attempted and unattempted rape recorded in 2017/18 have risen by sixty per cent compared to the ones recorded in 2011 and 2012 (WordsWorth Matt, 2018). As we are no longer oblivious to the dramatic increase of sexual assaults, we need to realize that Australia's future is in jeopardy if we continuously neglect the constant development of rape culture. Turning a blind eye has not only allowed it to spread like a fire but also build a home in our society. We cannot afford to ignore this serious matter any longer. We need to take a stand in order to support our fellow Australians, for the sake of the wellbeing of our country.

Victim Blaming

Whenever Rape culture is addressed, fingers are often pointed at the victim instead of focussing on the real issue. Turning our backs on the victims has led them to doubt their worth and security. For instance, many incidents of rape or sexual assaults coming from victimized women often go unreported simply because of the weight of humiliation, horror and hesitancy of being considered a liar, placing the victim in a very precarious position. We push the victims at the bottom of a dry unused well, only giving them the option of looking up and seeing a silver of blue, wondering if they will ever escape their demons. The Australian Institute of Family Studies documented that "The perception that false allegations of sexual assault are common, has negative consequences for victims of sexual assault and society, more generally by perpetuating victims' fear of being disbelieved or being blamed for the assault. This reduces the likelihood of reporting" (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2019). Due to the stereotypical standards based on genders, several victims of sexual harassment would not only neglect labels that signify fatality but also normalize their experiences, facing the harsh reality of sexually aggressive male behaviour. This woman; could be your mother, sister, or even a close friend. Would you be okay if a loved one was going through a rollercoaster of undesirable emotions? Another thing to mention is that there is another side of unreported rape crimes that come from victimized men, which has a considerably lower rate of reporting due to the stigma against passive-aggressive behaviour of men, comprehending a situation with men playing a weak role is beyond comprehension for most people. According to the "Centres Against Sexual Assault" (CASA) Forum, only 1 in 6 reports of rape actually result in a prosecution. It is hopeless waiting for a bomb to go off, knowing it won't blast. As the saying goes, when you point the finger at others, there are three pointing right back at you. As we judge the victim for choosing to act "weak", are we forgetting to take accountability for the behaviour we are allowing in our neighbourhood?

False Accusations

Sexual harassment is a sensitive subject for the majority of victims, sharing their experience is like walking in heavy fog where one isn't certain where they are stepping. Besides, there are layers to rape culture that makes one think twice before stepping forward. False allegations are a particular factor that pressures the victim to feel sceptical due to the fear of not gaining validation from society as it is difficult to prove consent. For instance, if someone commits a murder using a gun, there are various methods to trace the bullet to the shooter, solving the case. Solving a rape case isn't black and white since consent to the sexual act cannot be sketched back. Now, some may argue against the probability of false accusations happening, claiming that it is improbable, irrational and simply too inhumane to occur but there are numerous reasons regarding the motivation into someone making a false rape claim. It can even be as insignificant, inessential and injudicious as disliking the person and setting them up for it. In a recent event last month, a woman named Sarah-Jane Parkinson from Canberra, has been jailed for making a false rape claim against her ex-partner and sentenced for more than three years. The victim spent over four months in jail over this conviction and it almost destroyed him mentally as he told the court that his ex-partner's crime "nearly drove him to suicide, changed who he was and shattered his faith in the legal system" (ABC News, 2019). False accusations don't only make judgment tougher for the legal system, but also for the rape victims as coming forward is stepping in a dark lonely bottomless pit with slippery sides having little to no hope of making out alive. We need to shed light, as they are descending into the darkness. We need to lend a hand to these victims. We need to encourage them to come forward and seek justice because that is what they should demand, desire, and deserve.

Solving the Problem

If someone has a heart attack, we don't ask them why they received it or blame their food choices for it. We do our best to provide them with the best medical service to help them get through it. Why do we question a rape victim's clothing choices? It is almost like we are blaming them for being unwillingly exploited. We need to stand together in order to eradicate rape culture. Instead of critiquing the victims, we need to genuinely address rape culture by opposing our fundamental culture of objectification: one which conditions men and women to view women as things to be possessed rather than as human beings, teaches girls that womanhood is synonymous with being sexualized, and then shames women when they're sexually assaulted. This hypocritical culture can be altered by acknowledging the reality and choosing to make a difference. Difference can be simply made by educating young people about consent and viewing women as a being rather than a trophy. Another thing to mention is that the recurrence of this crime is a clear indication that the current laws are inadequate, inconsistent, and not methodically obligatory. It is vital to generate a supportive environment in which survivors feel safe speaking up and calling out their attackers and in which the consequences for potential rapists are emphasized instead. New laws are required that aim to empower survivors, not rapists. The answer to decrease Rape culture, is making a cultural and a legal shift. Let's make people up rather than breaking them down.

Conclusion

Rape and rape culture is an extremely delicate predicament for numerous people and they cannot be blamed for it. I believe that we need to be very careful about what we do with these discussions. As for a victim, it's a deep wound that may heal with time but leaves a scar. These discussions may be rubbing salt on their wound. Our society has the ability to decrease the rate

of rape culture, but it is not something that will happen overnight. Rape culture will continue to be a serious social issue until we, as a sophisticated society, choose to criticise the victim and look over the predators' actions. So, let's start questioning and paying attention to the predator before the victim eventually becomes a loved one.

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