

VIOLENZA

How to win this fight now that rape is justified through the phrase “she was asking for it”

Did any man ever wonder how horrible his life in a society with inverse gender roles would be? A society where woman would be the powerful, the strong, the reasonable one and him the powerless, the dominated, the “ridiculously” emotional one. A society where he would be degraded in a sexual object, where he would run the eternal danger of rape every time he would return home alone. If he were would have been forced, after a rape, to feel fear, shame and guilt, as well as having on top of this a society judging him, because he -haha- “was asking for it” with his provocative outfit and behaviour.

However society is not like this. Violence against and oppression is a daily occurrence for women. Rapes happen every day, at every moment and on every corner of the earth. Occasionally some -the most exciting- will feature as news to fill the pages of some newspaper. However, other than the ludicrous news reports that present this criminal action as a thriller, rape constitutes a taboo topic. It is a daily crime that is wilfully silenced, both by men who so retain their authority, as well as by women, who whilst they feel the desperation and justice swallowing them up, they are scared to express their protest and struggle against this crime.

RAPE: MYTH AND REALITY

“Rape is the violent sexual act that a person experiences without his/her consent, or the violent sexual attack of one man (or multiple men) against a woman, a child, or more rarely a young boy.”*

*From the book “Our Body and Us” page.78

Even if rapes happen daily, no humanist, idealist, politician, or philosophers did ever seriously engage with this topic. On the contrary literature, films and daily chats insinuate that rape is the secret desire of every woman, distorting reality. If to this the various psychological studies are added which postulate that both women and men have rape fantasies, and thus women are asking for their rape, the whole picture that rape is something normal is also scientifically stamped.

However, is a fantasy enough for someone to conclude that a woman wants to be raped? Obviously, we have not reached such an outrageous point of masochism. The “desire” of a woman to be raped comes to contradiction with the feminine “nature”, which society first accepts: On the one hand [society] presents us as sensitive, emotional and tender and on the other as masochistic beings that want to be raped and abused.

Oftentimes rape is presented as the “inescapable” outcome of the lack of sexual relations. It is nonetheless, most of the times, mainly, the man’s need to dominate and be sexually validated.

Thus psychologists, as well as every kind of “wise men” of this society, had better engaged with the male desire for domination and violence, instead of promoting outrageous theories on female masochism. For a man to impose violently on the body of a woman, even against all her protests and physical resistance, is nothing else than the masculine imposition over the feminine, a trial of muscle power that leads the male to the “triumphant” evidence of his masculinity.

The common male excuse that we hear for rape, is that the woman “was asking for it” with her provocative outfit and behaviour. You see, in today’s society the woman is always to be blamed. Men

are the infallible ones, that just “respond” to the female provocation... The truth is, however, that the desire for rape is not due to the provocativeness of woman. What leads a man to rape is not the pretty face, nor the attractive body with the harmonious moves. The man that rapes is attracted from the fact that the woman is alone and powerless and thus [he is] sure of his triumph. Defenseless and isolated women of all ages, old and young, commonly fall victims of rape.

We often hear from groups of men that they tell us how we “like” to make love:

“All women love making love violently”

“No woman can be raped unless she wants to”

“When women say no, they mean yes”.

“Painless”, daily expressions that us too in turn let drop without any protest. Men’s words, that as it seems, know better than us what we want, without obviously having made the effort of asking us.

If a woman does not want to have sexual contact with some man, and he continues against her will, then we are talking about rape. In this sense a rapist is not only the sexually perverse that is looking for lone women on the street, but anyone. Our father, our brother, our husband, our friend can be a rapist.

Rapists against whom no law can “protect” us, since rape in a couple “does not exist”; rapes that happen from our men “guardians” because of the woman’s dependence on the man. An emotional, financial dependence that impedes the woman and eliminates her resistance. Rapes, that happen on the basis of the insecurity that female standards of beauty cause in us and force us to make love without really wanting to. The fear to not be classified in the category of cold women or prudes, virgins, the subtle hints that we are not women since we do not want to be fucked, the sarcasms that we are perverts and full of complexes since we do not behave like cuddly cats, force us to succumb to their appetites. Cases from which we would gladly escape discreetly, if we could. Cases, however, where we do not dare to clearly say no, in case we do not appear “liberated” enough.

However, no matter how our rape is, at gunpoint or not, with punches or with emotional blackmails, in isolated alleyways or under romantic sheets, this act always constituted an act of ignorance for the feelings of woman.

“JUSTICE”

Thanks to the various women’s movements an ever-growing number of rapes is now reported in the courts. [This is] positive given that a woman dares to make public her indignation in a desperate attempt to find vindication. But can she be vindicated from the laws of the state and its instruments of order that the male Authority supports, especially when male violence is accused? Of course, she quickly finds out that the law and his representatives understand her as much as the man who raped her.

A woman, rape victim, that finds recourse in justice, will first have to confront the police -organs of state violence- that are so insensitive and inhumane, that it is truly unlikely for them to be able to reach some level of awareness. On the contrary it is more likely that they in turn will also make vile proposals.

Secondly the woman will undergo a medical examination in which it will be researched if the victim

was a virgin and then if she has suffered injuries. If the victim had the “audacity” to have a sexual life prior to the rape, then it is very doubtful if she will win the battle. Society comes this way to demands the female purity. In case the victim was a virgin, this will be considered as a positive point for the woman. It is clear, of course, that for a virgin -rape victim- the psychological effects are more serious, because her sexual life starts with the horrible experience of a rape.

This of course does not mean that for the non-virgin traumas are not created. Rape is always rape, whether the victim is a virgin or not. As far as injuries are concerned, a woman’s attempt becomes more difficult in case the victim does not bear visible signs of abuse, because “there are no evidence”. Let us not forget though, that in many instances rape happens under the threat of a gun which does not leave physical signs and where the woman cannot react.

The trial makes up the peak of the whole, humiliating procedure. The woman will soon realise that rape is easy to happen but hard to prove.

Amongst the cases that trouble the court, the crime of rape is unique in its kind, presenting the following specificity: in a rape trial the proof of rape burdens the woman doubly. The woman must not only prove the guilt of her rapist, but also her own innocence. In other judicial cases the accused is not guilty until proven so, condition that also applies for rape. But unlike other trials, here, the victim is not de facto considered innocent, but she has to prove it. Rape is maybe the only crime where the perpetrator comes out innocent and the victim guilty, where both the prosecuting authority and the defence try to prove the accused party’s innocence.

During this trial, the personality of the woman will play a decisive role for her acquittal or not. Unlike other cases, where the personalities of both get scrutinised, in this case only the one of the woman is. The woman has to prove that her life is within the bounds of “social morality”, that she fulfils her “duties” as a “good citizen” and that she did not in any way provoke her rapist.

As we see, a woman who wishes to report her rape, will find minimum or no support from the police or the court. The question then arises why should we report rapes. It is, however, time rape stopped being considered a minor issue and going unnoticed. It is time women stopped being silent at the face of such a crime. Maybe this way laws can become less unjust, without this meaning that the issue of rape will be solved.

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION...

We are living in a society hierarchically structured, based on competition and interests. A society that dictates us to take the defined roles of dominant and dominated. Clearly the relations between man and woman (dominant and dominated),, well-defined from since the division of roles, do not escape this general social frame. Man was defined to be the strong, the hard, the active one, the one that takes all initiative. Woman has to be the passive one, the one without agency, without personality or independence, the willing object of pleasure and care for the others. Much more in their sexual life, they have to correspond to these social norms. As long as sexual life will be based on a relation between strong and weak, it will always make up a phenomenon of authority and rape will come as a result and practical proof of this power. Its elimination cannot exist if the structures of today’s dominating society do not change.

Until then, however, we will live with the daily threat of rape. Better then to prepare ourselves mentally and physically for the idea of our potential rape, than suddenly find ourselves defenseless in the mercy of a rapist. Some self-defense techniques are useful and moreover give us certainty and confidence. In case of rape we must not hesitate to defend ourselves with all the means we possess:

purses, books or any other heavy object we have. Some women feel safer having always in their purse a spray. Usually most women, having grown up in a protective environments where “respectable” girls do not fight, do not react, hesitate to use violence. But let us not forget that here it is about our mental and physical integrity. We do not want violence. We do not believe that self-defense is the solution to rape, nor do we try to hand out recipes for its avoidance. Our aim is the eradication of rape and not just its confrontation and avoidance in a personal level. “Hacks” such as locking ourselves in early, avoiding deserted streets, or always going out with our men-guardians, not only do not offer a substantial solution, but on the contrary they perpetuate male dominance.

Rape makes up a very successful male method, the most irresistible weapon man possesses, to keep a woman in a state of fear and submission and isolate this way her every reaction. Rape will not stop with the woman closing herself in the house. Only through her own struggle against every definition can she stand up against rape. She has to stop believing that she is a weak-willed and subjugated being. [She has to] deny the passive role that she has been assigned. [She has to] stop giving in.

We want to be out on the street without fear, wherever and whenever we want. We want to exist for us. We want our body to belong to us. We want to exist as autonomous and independent humans. Rape will stop when strong and weak will stop existing.

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