

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month!

Turning Points Network

Preventing Violence
Promoting Respect
Strengthening Lives

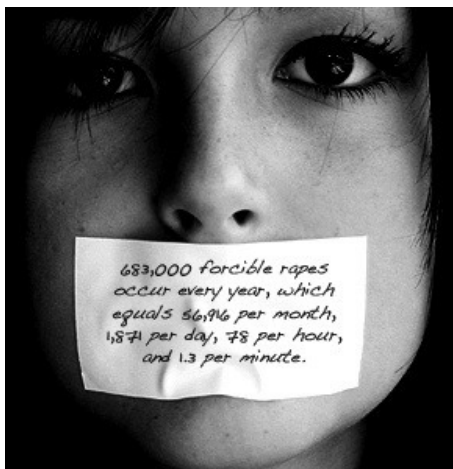


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Why do Rapists go Free?

by Hannah, AmeriCorps VISTA at TPN

If you were stopped on the street and asked if you thought rape was bad, what would you say? Most people in the U.S. would say 'yes'. If this is the case though, why do so many rapists go free without so much as a slap on the wrist? According to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) only about 310 of every 1000 rapes are reported to the police. 57 of the 310 reports will lead to an arrest; only 7 will be convicted and only 6 will be incarcerated. This means that even of the 310 people who report out of every thousand who are raped very few get some kind of justice. The vast majority of rapists never see the inside of a jail cell, or even the inside of a court room. If we are the people who believe that rape is wrong, who make up the jury of our peers, and are the lawyers, police and supporters, then we are part of the problem. Rapes are not being reported and rapists are not being convicted, which leaves us with one question: Why? Without the promise of justice it is no wonder survivors are keeping their experiences to themselves.



Could all of this be because of a common misunderstanding on what rape is and how it happens? According to a study done at MIT with graduate and undergrad students, the idea that it's not rape unless the victim gives a clear and forceful 'no', is not uncommon. It is also not uncommon to believe that if the person who was raped was intoxicated in any way, they are somewhat responsible. Many people blame a victim because of what they were wearing, doing, saying, or drinking at the time of or before the assault to insinuate they could be willing to have sex. Just because you think someone is, or even was, willing doesn't mean you have their consent. Consent is a lot more than assumptions and it can be heard in someone's words and seen in someone's body

language. Somehow the person you are going to have sexual relations with had to tell you 'yes'. Not 'no' or 'maybe' or silence. Consent is not consent if either party is uncertain, or if either party feels coerced, threatened, or bribed. Consent is not 'no' or 'maybe' or silence. Consent needs to be freely given and affirmative. Just because someone consents to one activity, it does not mean they consent to all of them. Just because someone consents one time, does not mean they consent every time. Even when someone consents they can change their mind part way through and the other person needs to respect this and stop.

The definition of rape in the New Hampshire statute is very clear. The lack of a 'no' does not mean 'yes' and this is, I think, where a lot of blurred lines are drawn. Many times when a rape is reported all fingers are pointed to the victim, commonly referred to as victim blaming. Questions like "What were they wearing?" "How much did they have to drink?" "Were they giving the wrong impression?" are asked. This is partially to bring us comfort that this couldn't happen to us because we're more careful than that. Maybe our skirts always reach our knees, maybe we don't walk alone at night, maybe we always keep our eyes on our drinks when we're at the bar and we use the buddy system when we go to the bathroom. Maybe if we do all of these things we won't be raped and so if someone is raped they must have done something wrong. The problem with this train of thought is that people are raped in the middle of the day, they're raped by people they know and by people they don't. People are raped sober and drunk and everything in between. It is a scary thought but there isn't any specific action that someone can do to keep themselves 100% safe from being raped. Currently, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 6 men will be assaulted in their lifetime and 85% of these assaults will be committed by someone they know and probably trust.

There are two things that I think are very important to remember in these situations. First, that consent needs to be given before the sexual act not after or during, and either party can change their mind at any point. And second, that rape is an act of power and control, it is serious and harmful and isn't a 'misunderstanding'. Why do rapists go free? What needs to change so more justice is served and more victims are helped? To stop the violence we need to change the culture, and that begins with you and me.

Download the National Sexual Violence Resource Center guides to discover ["What is Sexual Violence?"](#) and learn about ["The Impact of Sexual Violence."](#)

Take a stand against Sexual Violence with TPN!

Visit our [Facebook Page](#) for posts, videos and links you can share to help change the culture around Sexual Violence.



Steppin' Up to End Violence 5K Walk and Fun Run on May 6th! This unique community event and fundraiser has been held in Claremont for ten years and counting. Join the fabulous individuals and teams "steppin' up" to walk, stroll, jog or run to end violence in our community. Funds raised from this event go directly to TPN in support of survivors of domestic and sexual violence, stalking and human trafficking.



It isn't too late to get **your** team together! Click [here](#) for the "run"down of what you need to know to start your own team.

Don't want to have a team? No worries! Take a friend or come walk on your own. Join hundreds of people from our community who step up together to take a stand against violence. No pre-registration necessary. Call 543-0155 with any questions.

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