

Dismantling Rape Culture around the World: A Social Justice Imperative

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Abstract

Many object to the term *rape culture*, deeming it an overstatement. Some even consider it an oxymoron, for how does rape and culture really connect? In speaking of culture, we editors of *Transforming A Rape Culture* (Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth 1993, 1995 and 2005) refer to the way in which a society operates formally and informally, based on attitudes, beliefs, customs, and rituals that its members sanction as acceptable and normal. Based on our research and analysis of the high incidence of sexual violence perpetrated around the world, we contend that the term encompasses widespread anti-female attitudes and values, and the resultant oppressive conditions women and children encounter in the global institution of patriarchy. Misogyny and sexism are the cornerstones of patriarchy that enable a rape culture to flourish.

In *Transforming A Rape Culture*, we define a rape culture as “a complex of beliefs that encourage male sexual aggression and supports violence against women [and girls], a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent, and a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women [and girls] and presents it as the norm” (Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth 2005, XI). The physical and emotional terror that stems from sexual violence, while often deemed as terrible, is usually dismissed as individual misfortune rather than understood as a cultural phenomenon.

Introduction

In this internationally-focused paper, rape culture means, based on the Rome Statue, Article 7, of the International Criminal Court’s definition of crimes against humanity, the violation of the mind, body, and spirit, whether in public or private life, including battery, molestation, sexual harassment, “rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity” (<http://untreaty.un.org/cod/icc/statute/romefra.htm>). In 1992, editors of *Transforming A Rape Culture* (1993, 1995, and 2005), held several focus groups in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, and found among the diversity of the group members—male and female, white and of color—that nearly each of them has been affected somehow by rape culture (Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth 2005, XI).

Although rape is underreported to the police, U.S. Department of Justice studies show that when rape survivors do report, more than 50% of them state that they knew the rapist (Ibid). World Health Organization (WHO) statistics report that in most countries, 30 percent to 60 percent of women encountered physical or sexual assault by an intimate partner. (Kristof and WuDunn 2009, 61)

Given such a global trend, women and men accept sexual violence as normal and interminable. In their acceptance, they tacitly sanction the notion that women and children’s bodies belong to men to treat according to their will. As a result, the unjust institution of patriarchy that condones and upholds a rape culture, which dehumanizes women and girls, tends to go unexamined and unchallenged. Rape culture will persist until societal values and attitudes change to create and institute gender parity, yielding social justice.

Looking at Rape Culture Through the Lens of Catholic Social Teaching

According to Theologian Russell B. Connors, Jr.,

The phrase ‘Catholic Social Teaching’ refers to the sum total of teachings provided by Catholic leaders—popes, bishops, and sometimes theologians—concerning the social issues of the day, especially over the past 100 years. Christian faith does not shield believers from difficult social issues, but rather impels them to try to contribute to their solutions. In that spirit, the popes and bishops do not presume to offer simple answers to complex questions, but try to show what the relationship might be between Christian faith and social issues. (Connors 2009, 124-125)

Of course, there are multiple and multifaceted perspectives of social justice, so why choose Catholic Social Teaching (CST) to address the issue of rape culture? CST challenges the *social structures* that underlie a rape culture.

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII led the way for confronting the social injustice of the day when he wrote his encyclical letter, “Rerum Novarum” (“The Condition of Labor”) (Ibid, 126). In this letter, the pope confronted the terrible working conditions laborers encountered in the new industries of European cities: “He called for a change in the social structures and institutions . . . that were the causes of the poverty and misery of the workers. He called for a just and living wage, for working conditions that were safe, and for laws that would prevent the abuse of children in the workforce....He insisted that human dignity must be recognized and respected in the workers of the world” (Ibid). Fundamental to CST are convictions of justice, like human dignity and equality, that challenge structural frameworks upholding injustice of *any* nature.

Humanity dignity is one of the seven convictions of CST:

The life and dignity of every human being is of incalculable worth and must be recognized, respected, and revered. Human rights, ‘the minimum conditions of life for community,’ (U.S. Catholic Bishops, ‘Economic Justice for All,’ par. 17) must be protected and promoted in order for human dignity to be respected and human beings to flourish. (Ibid, 127)

Human dignity and human rights go hand in hand, according to CST, and both must be recognized and respected.

Theologian J. Milburn Thompson defines “rights” as “those basic human goods that are due to human beings so that they can develop themselves fully as persons living in community” (Ibid, 129). In his 1963 encyclical letter, “Pacem in Terris,” Pope John XXIII listed eight human rights. One of the rights directly applicable to self-development is “the right to choose one’s state in life” (Ibid). Any human being subjected steadily to the will and abuse of another learns to live in fear and fails to live according to her own will, unable to thrive.

The 30 Articles of the United Nations’ 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights establish secular perspectives of social justice; and, Article 1 reflects the CST conviction, *human dignity*. Article 1 states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards each other in the spirit of [community] (Hanley et al 2009, 231).” (Here community replaces brotherhood). Article 1 also coincides with the CST conviction, equality: “*Equality*. All human beings are fundamentally equal, regardless of race, creed, gender, sexual orientation, and educational or economic status. Every ‘-ism’ that alienates and oppresses people must be opposed and overcome” (Connors 2009, 127). Sexism and misogyny that alienates and oppresses women and children can be

opposed and overcome through incremental structural, systemic change. The convictions of Catholic Social Teaching and the Articles of the U.N.'s 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights set the stage for such change globally.

Making Sexual Violence A Human Rights Issue

Following the creation of the United Nations' 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, the Fourth 1949 Geneva Convention, established international humanitarian law "relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War." Article 27 proclaimed: "Protected persons are entitled, in all circumstances, to respect for their persons, their honour, their family rights, their religious convictions and practices, and their manners and customs. They shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof and against insults and public curiosity. Women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault" (<http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/full/380?opendocument>). Vesna Kesic (2005, 280) points out, though, that a closer reading of this government document reveals that sexual violence against women during war is considered "an assault on honor or... a crime against morality and not... an act of violence against a human being." While the document calls for the protection of women, it doesn't include any repercussions for committing violence against women. In fact, the document offers no clear consequences for the violation of any of the 159 articles. Instead, it sets out to influence public policy. It acts as a standard of conduct, propelled by Henry Dunant and Gustave Moynier, co-founders of the Red Cross, who decided that their voluntary humanitarian organization would serve as a non-governmental organization in monitoring the treatment of prisoners of war and civilians during wartime.

([http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Geneva_Conventions_\(1949\)](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Geneva_Conventions_(1949)))

According to Kesic (Ibid, 273), "Although sexual violence of women in wartime has been known throughout human history, rape had not been recognized specifically as a war crime. Wartime rapes had not been investigated, prosecuted, or punished because no laws covered them. Like peacetime sexual assaults against women, they remained crimes without a name." Notable incidents of such crimes are: The Rape of Nanjing in 1937, the exploitation of Japanese "comfort women" used as sexual slaves throughout Asia during WWII, the mass rape of German women at the end of WWII, and the widespread rapes of women during the Bangladesh-Pakistan war in the early 1970s (Ibid, 272). In the 1990s, however, the extensive media coverage and the general outrage about the mass rapes that had occurred in Bosnia and Rwanda caused an attitudinal shift.

Notably, in 1995, the U.N.'s Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development, and Peace took place in Beijing, China during September 4-15. The attendees addressed three critical issues: women and armed conflict, violence against women, and women's human rights. The conference's central concern was to address the inequality and discrimination occurring in women's private and public lives. There was a call to remove obstacles to women's public and private lives through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural, and political decision-making (<http://www.un.or.womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/armed.htm> (accessed July 8, 2010).

At this conference, during the time when she served as First Lady, Hilary Rodham Clinton delivered her famous speech, "Women's Rights are Human Rights." In this speech, she stated, "As long as discrimination and inequities remain so commonplace around the world - as long as girls and women are valued less, fed less, fed last, overworked, underpaid, not schooled and subjected to violence in and out of their homes - the potential of the human family to create a

peaceful, prosperous world will not be realized. Let this Conference be our - and the world's - call to action” (<http://www.famousquotes.me.uk/speeches/Hillary-Clinton/>). Clearly, Clinton and women worldwide were coalescing to raise consciousness about the injustice plaguing women and girls’ lives and taking concrete action to make change.

In 1993, two years prior to the U.N.’s Fourth World Conference on Women, The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, adopted by the U.N. World Conference on Human Rights, had paved the way for the recognition of women’s rights as human rights. Although it specifically focused on women’s rights *during wartime*, this document was the first to acknowledge women’s status as human: “Violations of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict are violations of the fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law” <http://www.un.or.womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/armed.htm> (accessed on July 8, 2010).

The 1990s were a pivotal time, for also in 1993 and 1995, the International War Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) were established respectively. As Vesic (2005, 274-275) observes:

The statute of the ICTY is the first international legal document that singles out rape as a crime against humanity... The mass rapes that took place during the wars in the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, were the first in history to be brought before an international court, and these crimes, together with the mass rapes that occurred in Rwanda, contributed to groundbreaking changes in international humanitarian law.

Forty-five years later, since the various humanitarian stances of the United Nations, the 1949 Fourth Geneva Conference, and the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, the 1993 ICTY statute finally authorizes the world court to institute and try rape as a crime against humanity.

From a feminist legal perspective, however, Kesic (2005, 286) explains that women lawyers and activists argue that the 1993 ICTY statute doesn’t consider rape a *gender-specific* crime against women, but a crime against women as members of an ethnic or a national group: “It was not the atrocity as such (mass rape of women, harm done to the single woman), but the purpose of that atrocity, in these cases ethnic cleansing or genocide, that decided the character of the crime.” The emphasis on gender-specific crimes occurred five years later with the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Established in 1998 as a sort of watchdog, it investigates and prosecutes war crimes, crimes of genocide, and crimes against humanity when the national authorities shirk their responsibilities. Because the ICC recognizes the role gender plays in the perpetration of crimes against women, the Rome Statute includes the following:

1. Gender-specific crimes are now included under two of the three core crimes that are provided: crimes against humanity and war crimes.
2. The listing of the crimes cover a much broader spectrum than before (ICTY, ICTR). Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity are defined as crimes against humanity. (Ibid)

Through the persistence of women and their male allies, it took 50 years for women to gain status as human beings, particularly in the arena of international law. Yet, the struggle for women’s rights as human rights still persists, in times of both war and peace.

The Continuum of Violence Against Women

Kesic (Ibid, 271) asks the following important question: “To what extent does gendered war violence differ from everyday peacetime violence against women, such as rape, battery, and sexual harassment? Do these different forms of violence all belong to the same continuum of violence against women?” A related question is also as important: Should the violence perpetrated against women and children in developing countries (rape and genocide in wartime, and sexual abuse and exploitation in peacetime) be ranked above the violence women and children suffer in wealthy countries? Clearly, the institution of patriarchy becomes distended during war, when men exaggerate their allegiance to the traditional notions of masculinity, exercising might over others who are deemed weak. The power that men assume by dominating, abusing, and exploiting women and children, male supremacy, becomes heightened during war. Nevertheless, this power to subjugate women and children, this male supremacy, still operates, mostly covertly, during peacetime and in wealthy countries.

Living in a wealthy country may lead some to feel a false sense of security or to trivialize pervasive sexual violence that may be concealed. Statistics, though, challenging to collect, indicate that much of the violence perpetrated against many women goes unnoticed and unreported to police. As Kristof and WuDunn (2009, 61) state, “A major study by the World Health Organization [WHO] found that in most countries, between 30 percent and 60 percent of women had experienced physical or sexual assault by a husband or boyfriend. ‘Violence against women by an intimate partner is the major contributor to the ill health of women,’ said former director of WHO, Lee Jong-wook.” Regarding the occurrence of intimate partner violence in the United States, the National Violence Against Women Survey (Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth 2005, 8) report,

Violence against women is primarily intimate partner violence: 64 percent of the women who reported being raped, physically assaulted, or stalked since age eighteen were victimized by a current or former husband, cohabitating partner, boyfriend, or date....The report concludes with the statement that violence against women, particularly intimate partner violence, should be classified as a major public health and criminal justice concern in the United States.

Despite the WHO statistics Kristof and WuDunn (2009, 61) cite in their work pertaining to intimate partner violence, they (Ibid, xv) contend, “Discrimination in western countries is often a matter of unequal pay or underfunded sports teams or unwanted touching from a boss. In contrast, in much of the world, discrimination is lethal.” *There is no doubt:* in developing countries, poor women and girls suffer horrific, public treatment or death at the hands of men and boys. No one can argue against the degree or nature of violence that occurs. Yet, in western countries, the terrible and often secret treatment or death that women and girls endure is serious and noteworthy. For instance, one can find similarity in the incidence of rape that females encounter globally, as noted in the following statistics:

1. Women in the U.S. reported that they were raped at an early age: 17.6% said they had been victims of an attempted or a completed rape, 21.6% were younger than age 12, and 32.4% were between the ages 12 and 17. (Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth 2005, 7)
2. Twenty-one percent of young women surveyed in Ghana reported that their sexual initiation was by rape. (Kristof and WuDunn 2009, 62)
3. Seventeen percent of Nigerian women said they had endured rape or attempted rape by the age of nineteen. (Ibid)

4. Twenty-one percent of South African women reported that they had been raped by the age of fifteen. (Ibid)

The statistics have a common thread: a significant percentage of *girls* were assaulted. All women and girls, no matter where they are in the world, experience some kind of gender discrimination, abuse, and violence, though the experience definitely varies in form and scale. The experience is especially insidious in the West because it is often veiled. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize the extent and the varied facets of patriarchy.

Without an understanding of how the institution of patriarchy functions, women cannot resist and struggle to overcome the structural, systemic force. It is *a way of life* around the world. It cannot be dismantled until the differential power of men fundamental to the institution of patriarchy—a structure that institutes, promotes, and perpetuates gender inequality, misogyny, and violence—is acknowledged as unjust by both men and women. Underlying a rape culture are vicious anti-female attitudes that even women harbor. Women’s complicity, given its vast complexity, with the institution of patriarchy must also be acknowledged as part of the problem. In their attempt to persuade their reader to join the movement in “emancipating” poor women and girls in developing countries, Kristof and WuDunn (2009, 67-69) remark that men are not villains and tyrants. Yes, they admit: “Men are brutal to women.” But, they argue, “Women themselves transmit misogynistic values just as men do. This is not a tidy world of tyrannical men and victimized women, but a messier realm of oppressive social customs adhered to by men and women....These attitudes are *embedded in culture* and will change only with education and leadership” (Italics mine). On some level, they are right about women’s complicity. They are right about the problem being structural and systemic, an institution of patriarchy upheld by everyone.

But their analysis is shortsighted because they don’t acknowledge male supremacy that is foundational to patriarchy. The social injustice of rape culture will not cease without a true societal commitment to examining and addressing the social, political, and economic power men possess over women and children. This differential power infiltrates every aspect of the world, through every patriarchal structure of society, particularly the family and gender relations, accompanied by the resultant attitudes and beliefs about female inferiority.

The Challenge of Dismantling Rape Culture

Attitudes and values must continue to change. Change happens incrementally, slowly, as demonstrated over the 50 years it took to get international law to recognize and protect women’s humanity and rights. It took even longer for American women to gain the right to vote through the 19th amendment—nearly 100 years. After the 19th amendment was passed in 1920, suffragist Alice Paul wrote the Equal Rights Amendment in 1921. It took 49 years for Congress to finally pass the amendment, but it fell short of the necessary three votes required for ratification by the July 1982 deadline. Given such national history, it’s not ironic that the U.S.A., the number one super power in world politics, is less progressive in its views and values regarding women than, say, Rwanda, a worn-torn and violent country, where women hold 55 percent of the seats in the lower house of Parliament, or Liberia, another worn-torn and violent country, where a woman, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, is the head of state. While the U.S.A. has a nice, shiny veneer, underneath lies a marred relationship to its female citizenry. This is what patriarchy looks like in the States. But, it’s this nice, shiny veneer that lulls many American women into a false sense of security.

In the summer of 2009, Diplomatic Correspondent Mark Landler interviewed Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton about a new international gender agenda before she left the U.S.

for an 11-day trip to Africa. In noting that gender equality is not universally accepted, even in the U.S. A., he asked Clinton the following question:

“I’ve been at more than a few women’s events with you overseas where the men in the audience drift off to their Blackberrys or into a snooze after a few minutes. How do you change the mind-set, not just over seas but at home and in this building, that tends to view women’s issues as a pink ghetto?” (Landler 2009, 43). Clinton replied, “ By making the arguments that I am making here—that the so-called women’s issues are stability issues, security issues, equity issues (Ibid). Later in the interview, Landler mentioned the question that a young Indian woman in New Delhi asked Clinton: “How would you view the progress of women in both India and United States [where a female president is yet to be elected while India elected a woman prime minister within three decades of independence]?” (Ibid). Secretary of State Clinton stated, “My campaign for many millions of reason gave a lot of heart to many young women...I went back to school because of your campaign.’ So, it’s unfinished business, and young women know it is unfinished business” (Ibid). Clinton is speaking about the comments of young women living around the world, including those living in the U.S.A. They expressed to her a common feeling that they have about the inequity women still face and the necessity to overcome that inequity.

Unlike some who think that one specific program, like education, would be the panacea, Clinton asserts, with insight,

We are having as a signature issue the fact that women and girls *are* a core factor in our foreign policy. If you look at what has to be done, in some societies, it is a different problem than in others. In some of the societies where women are deprived of political and economic rights, they have access to education and health care. In some societies, they may have been given the right to vote, but girl babies are still being put out to die. So, it’s not one specific program, so much as a policy.

In their book, *Half the Sky*, Kristof and WuDunn (2009, 238) insist that two of the best ways to affect change is through education and economic empowerment of women in developing countries: “We’ve argued that one way to soothe some conflict-ridden societies is to bring women and girls into schools, the workplace, government, and business, partly to boost the economy and partly to ease testosterone-laden values of these countries. We would never argue that the [economic] empowerment of women is a silver bullet, but it is an approach that offers a range of rewards that go far beyond simple justice.” It is unclear what they mean by “simple justice,” but their point is well taken when one considers the time it takes to shift or create public policy. And, one knows that legislation cannot change the hearts and minds of people, though it can regulate their conduct along the way.

Yet, the authors seem to have a blind spot regarding the role of patriarchy in the oppression of women and girls. For example, their use of language, like the phrase “testosterone-laden,” is highly problematic, for it appears to trivialize the impact of male dominance. As journalists, Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (2009, 33) admit that before they began reporting on the violation of women’s human rights for the *New York Times* around 1990, they didn’t perceive the importance of doing such coverage: “Traditionally, the status of women was seen as a ‘soft’ issue—worthy but marginal...We preferred to focus instead on the ‘serious’ international issues, like trade disputes or arms proliferation.” Their initial consideration of women and girls’ status as “marginal” merely reflects how the world at large has always devalued female lives.

If one peels back the proverbial onion, one would notice the stark connection between the lives of women/girls and war, and their lives and the global economy. For instance, in speaking to the importance of educating girls in developing countries, a 2008 Goldman Sachs research report stated, “Gender inequality hurts economic growth” (Kristof and WuDunn 2009, xx). The Goldman Sachs’ report influenced the corporation to invest \$100 million in the business education of 10,000 women (Ibid). Moreover, Kristof and WuDunn (2009, 28) assert,

There’s a growing recognition among everyone from the World Bank to the U.S. military’s Joint Chiefs of Staff to aid organizations like CARE that focusing on women and girls is the most effective way to fight global poverty and extremism. That’s why foreign aid is increasingly directed to women. The world is awakening to a powerful truth: Women and girls aren’t the problem; they’re the solution.

While the journalists, economists, and politicians identify the solution, they avoid naming the problem directly. Kristof and WuDunn point out women who became successful entrepreneurs in their communities, creating employment opportunities and working to build wealth. Yet, the majority of female workers will not become entrepreneurs but will work in factories. In viewing the big picture, can world poverty be solved when women are exploited in sweatshops?

Kristof and WuDunn (Ibid, 28-29) further declare, “The oppression of women worldwide is the human rights cause of our time. And their liberation could help solve many of the world’s problems.” However, in their analysis of the problems and the oppression women and girls endure, the writers often use passive language, omitting the agent of any action taken against the women and girls they mention. For instance, in the following statement, Kristof and WuDunn (Ibid, 33-34) state:

The global statistics on the abuse of girls are numbing. It appears that more girls and women are now missing from the planet, precisely because they are female, than men were killed on the battlefield in all the wars of the 20th century. The number of victims of this routine ‘gendercide’ far exceeds the number of people who were slaughtered in all the genocides of the 20th century.

How can one make such an observation without addressing the underpinnings of “gendercide”? Who and what is behind the women and girls disappearing “precisely because they are female”? Their use of the word “numbing” to describe their response to the global statistics is telling: apparently, it’s business as usual for the power brokers of the world to feel nothing about this grim reality.

When Kristof and WuDunn (Ibid, 36) do recognize sexism and misogyny, they appear to disregard the effects of these factors:

It has long been known that a risk factor for turbulence and violence is the share of a country’s population made up of young people. Now it is emerging that male domination of a society is also a risk factor; the reasons are not fully understood, but it may be that when women are marginalized the nation takes on the testosterone-laden culture of a military camp or a high-school boys’ locker room.

It is difficult to fathom how such a statement can be made in the context of an article that speaks of a Rwandan woman being held hostage in a “rape house” during the genocide. Moreover, it is incomprehensible that the journalists perceive male domination of a society as just a risk factor, “reasons not fully understood,” for turbulence and violence.

In regards to “testosterone-laden” high school boys, Equalitynow.org (2010) reported, “At a boarding school in Kenya, 300 boys attacked the girls’ dormitory. Seventy-one of the girls

were raped. Nineteen were trampled to death in the stampede to escape. The school's vice principal remarked, 'The boys never meant any harm against the girls. They just wanted to rape.'" The vice principal's nonchalance speaks to a prevailing attitude that the act of rape is amusing rather than violent, upholding and conveying the notion that females are objects and prey, dispensable in a patriarchal structure. Just as the principal lets the boys off the hook, it appears that Kristof and WuDunn let patriarchy off the hook by denying its central role in perpetuating rape culture.

Furthermore, in their enthusiasm about empowering women to contribute to the gross national product (GNP) of their countries, the authors overlook the oppressive conditions the women probably encounter in factories. For instance, the authors reveal: "The economic explosion in Asia was, in large part, an outgrowth of the economic empowerment of women. 'They have smaller fingers, so they are better at stitching,' the manager of a purse factory explained to. 'They're obedient and work harder than men,' said the head of a toy factory. 'And we can pay them less'" (Kristof and WuDunn 2009, xiv). The managers of the factories essentially admit that they are operating a sweatshop in which they expect the women to work harder than the men for less pay. One can imagine the conditions of the work environment. Can the women take breaks? How many hours do they work per day and how much do they earn each day? Do they have the option to buy health insurance and, if so, can they afford to buy it? Do Kristof and WuDunn ask such questions? Are they concerned with making structural, systemic change or writing and selling stories?

In *Half the Sky*, the authors feature some heart-breaking yet inspirational stories, rather Cinderella-like, to persuade their readers to take action in helping to solve the problems of poor women in developing countries. The book's huge influence is leading many to do good—and Oprah's endorsement doesn't hurt! But, how much can Western readers' actions deracinate the root of global rape culture if they don't comprehend patriarchy and don't understand that it is operating at home and aboard?

Uprooting Rape Culture, A Conclusion

Scholars (Gordon & Riger 1989; Estrich 1987; Brownmiller 1975) theorize about the problem and prevalence of sexual violence in the U.S.A. while journalists (Jones, 2010; Kristof and WuDunn 2009) recount the horror of rape culture in developing countries. Kristof and WuDunn also propose economic solutions to poverty. The other writers raise the following questions: "Where does [male] rage come from?" (Jones 2010, 6). "What was the overall impact of fear of rape on the quality of women's lives?" (Gordon & Riger 1989, xv). "Is it real rape?" (Estrich 1987, 8). "Who are victims of rape?" (Brownmiller 1975, 9). They pose important questions, but none of them ask this crucial question, "Why don't we end sexual violence?" In her essay, "I Want A Twenty-Four Hour Truce During Which There Is No Rape," Andrea Dworkin (2005, 19) asserts, "It is astonishing that in all our worlds of feminism and anti-sexism we never talk seriously about ending rape. Ending it. Stopping it. No more. No more rape." Instead of such call to action, each decade brings books that are more sensational than those of the past. How many more books must be written to explicate this persistent dilemma?

A dilemma involves two choices: Do we continue to live in a rape culture or do we struggle together to transform our world into a humane, safe place for everyone?

In *Transforming A Rape Culture* (Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth 2005), we made a clear-eyed decision to focus less on what we entitled, "Living in a Rape Culture" and more on "Strategies and Activism," and "Visions and Possibilities": "At one of our several focus groups

in our community before the creation of the original edition, women responded enthusiastically to our emphasis on transformation. More than one person told us, ‘We don’t want to live in this culture as it is anymore. We’ve got to *change* it’” (Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth 2005, XIV). Offering concrete models and solutions for structural, systemic change is fundamental to the book’s purpose.

Since the publication of the 1993 hardcover edition of *Transforming A Rape Culture*, we have spoken to many audiences in the U.S., Canada, and Ghana, West Africa, and their responses have conveyed to us that there is an urgent need for the cultural transformation we call for in the book. Many readers have written to say that the book has increased their understanding that the causes of sexual violence are structural, systemic, and interrelated. They see that once the causes are understood, the culture can change for the better.

Regarding upholding and protecting the rights of women and girls as “human rights,” both men and women must continue the work of building a world that recognizes and respects the humanity of everyone. As Haki R. Madhubuti (2005, 182-183) declares in the following call to action:

A growing part of the answer is that men, as difficult as it may seem, must view all women (no matter who they are—race, culture, religion, or nationality aside) as extended family. The question is, and I know that I am stretching, would we rape our mothers, grandmothers, sisters, or other female relatives? Would we even give such acts a thought? Can we extend this attitude to all women? Therefore, we must:

1. Teach our sons that it is their responsibility to be antirapist; that is, they must be counterrapist in their thoughts, conversations, raps, organizations, and actions.
2. Teach our daughters how to defend themselves and maintain an uncompromising stance toward men and boys.
3. Understand that being a counterrapist is honorable, manly, and necessary for a just society.
4. Be glowing examples of men who are fighting to treat women as equals and to be fair and just in associations with women. This means at the core that we must continually reassess the family as now defined and constructed. In today’s economy, most women, married and unmarried, must work. We men must be intimately involved in rearing children and doing housework.
5. Be bold and strong enough to stop other men (friends or strangers) from raping and to intervene in a rape in process with the fury and destruction of a hurricane against the rapist.

Madhubuti writes 12 action steps in all, and they each articulate how men must challenge their anti-female thinking, rid themselves of their male supremacist notions, and work responsibly with women to create a life-affirming and just society.

In Step #4, Madhubuti addresses the need for men to be involved in childrearing and Myriam Miedzian concurs that this involvement is essential to dismantling a rape culture. Based on her research regarding the development of masculine identity, Myriam Miedzian (2005, 162),

believes: “In order to significantly decrease violence, including rape, we must begin to protect boys from violent entertainment and to teach them, from the youngest age, to view themselves as future nurturing, nonviolent, responsible fathers.” Miedzian finds that programs in child rearing deter violence in three ways: “They encourage nurturing, caring, informed fathering; they make boys feel that empathy, sensitivity, and caring are acceptable—even desirable—male qualities; and they strongly discourage child battering.” Miedzian encourages Americans to pressure their legislators and school boards to appropriate funds and develop child rearing classes. Such teaching is necessary, for it prevents the early indoctrination of misogynistic attitudes that often originate in the home.

In speaking to the need to reconstruct thinking around the development of masculinity and male sexuality, especially among male athletes, Michael Kimmel (2005, 156) asserts,

Part of transforming a rape culture means transforming masculinity, encouraging and enabling men to make choices about what we do with our bodies, insisting that men utilize their own agency to make difficult sorts of choices. To ignore men, to believe that women alone will transform a rape culture, freezes men in a posture of defensiveness, defiance, and immobility. [Involving men makes a big difference]. Nowhere is this better expressed than on a splash guard that a colleague devised for Rape Awareness Week at his university and that I have been bringing with me to campuses around the country. For those who don't know, a splash guard is the plastic grate placed in public urinals to prevent splatter. These simple devices are placed in urinals all over campus. This one comes with a helpful slogan: “You hold the power to stop rape in your hand.”

As Kimmel, Miedzian, and Madhubuti point out in various ways, a notion of masculinity considered antithetical and superior to femininity must be eradicated. In doing so, it is crucial for men to acknowledge the role they play in perpetuating a rape culture, whether passively or actively. Furthermore, it is necessary for men to examine, challenge, and abolish the idea of manhood that feeds on fear and relies on the subordination and violation of women and girls. It will demand a great deal of imagination accompanied with mental and spiritual strength to fashion a different idea of manhood, for it will require the letting go of the differential power that sustains male supremacy. What do adult male persons look like, think like, talk like, act like when they assume no power over females? The courageous, thoughtful male leadership that Madhubuti calls forth is vital in constructing masculine identity that accepts and values female equality in both private and public life.

How can women examine, challenge, and abolish sexist and misogynistic notions of masculinity and femininity that they have internalized? In “Seduced by Violence No More,” bell hooks (2005, 298) writes,

Women who engage in sexual acts with male partners must not only interrogate the nature of the masculinity we desire, we must actively construct radically new ways to think and feel as desiring subjects. By shaping our eroticism in ways that repudiate phallogentrism, we oppose rape culture...By refusing to function within the heterosexist framework, which condones male erotic domination of women, females would be actively disempowering patriarchy.

bell hooks' thoughts on constructing and possessing one's sexuality is important because women, especially young women, grapple with understanding and defining their sexuality in a rape culture that continually spews out abject stereotypes and negative imagery of women in

U.S. popular media that gets broadcast around the globe. No matter where a woman or girl lives, she is subject to viewing herself according to some Hollywood fantasy of femininity. The media seize control of female thinking and imagination to the point that it is nearly impossible to view oneself as anything other than an object or a victim. When interacting with media, women and girls must learn to reject anti-female messages in what they read, view and hear. Even imagery created, directed, and produced by women must be scrutinized.

Ten Things You Can Do to Transform a Rape Culture

This list was compiled from the essays in *Transforming A Rape Culture* (Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth 1993).

1. Remember that even though rape culture harms everyone, many of us get pleasure from it. **We are all responsible for perpetuating a rape culture.**
2. Teach your children to respect children of the opposite sex. Show them you believe that each sex has an immeasurable value and that neither is better, more powerful, or smarter, than the other.
3. Support your daughters, nieces, and neighbors. Encourage them to relish their physical strength and the strength of their minds.
4. Support and promote women who are positive role models. Celebrate the accomplishments of women with your children, partners, and friends. Teach others that the best women to look up to are the ones who are making a difference, not the ones who are the most famous, beautiful, or wealthy.
5. Do not listen quietly to sexist jokes or comments. Speak up when people make jokes or comments that you think are sexist. Tell your friends and family that you are uncomfortable with how they talk about women and girls. You have more personal power than you realize.
6. Do not be silent when you see a T-shirt, sign, movie, or anything you find offensive to women. Say something.
7. Have conversations of consent with a potential sexual partner. Verbally explore each others' comfort level with the activities taking place.
8. Learn to say "no." It's okay to be assertive, and it's possible to be nice while saying what you want and exerting your feelings.
9. Encourage the men you know to explore what it means to be anti-rapists.
10. Dare to dream culture free of sexual violence...a rape culture transformed into a culture of mutuality.

Coda

Resisting, opposing, and dismantling a rape culture that is embedded in our very being is an endless struggle, not one for the easily disheartened. bell hooks urges us, though, to have

courage and to enjoy the struggle, for it's not going away—if history is any clear indication of what's in store. In struggling for worldwide change, it is important to remember that *striking at the foundation* of the unjust institution of patriarchy is necessary for true transformation. Misogynistic and sexist attitudes must change among everyone. We women must do our own work to be part of the solution. We must educate ourselves and ground ourselves in the reality of global female oppression, in the west and abroad, so we thoroughly understand the extent of the problem. Even though, we may become fearful of what we discover, we cannot allow fear to keep us from struggling to do our part to end the injustice. It is also important to remember that we may not live to see the change we struggle to achieve. But, living to see it is not the point. Striving for the vision of the change is the reward.

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