

Chapter 5



Photo by Gail Lloyd

Raping the Next Generation

NO!

The Rape Documentary Study Guide

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"Bad girls only know about sex in the Black community and we still believe that. And we think that the best way to protect good girls is to keep them ignorant. We work hard to overcome that. So, at the D.C. Rape Crisis center we had to do a lot of sex education in order to do rape prevention."

—Loretta Ross, former director, D. C. Rape Crisis Center

MYTH

If she had sex with him before, she consented to have sex with him again.

FACT

Previous sexual conduct, including previous consent to sex, is not consent for sex right now. If she kissed him yesterday, that doesn't mean she wants to kiss him today.

SYNOPSIS

In *NO!* Rosetta Williams describes the sexual assault she experienced when she twelve years old. At the time of her assault, she was dating a much older boy from her neighborhood that repeatedly pressured her into having sex. Being so young, completely unaware of intercourse or penetration, and a virgin, Rosetta thought she should have sexual intercourse with him because she was "in love." However, after they had sex about four times, her much older boyfriend pressured her to have sex with him outdoors. When she refused to have sex with him and said "no," he repeatedly punched her in her face, pulled down her pants, and raped her.

DEFINITION

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or violent personal assaults like rape. People who suffer from Rape Trauma Syndrome, which is a form of PTSD, often relive the experience through nightmares and flashbacks, have difficulty sleeping, and feel detached or estranged. These symptoms can be severe and last long enough to significantly impair the person's daily life.

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Rosetta's boyfriend pressure her into having sex before the rape? What about during and after the sexual assault?
2. Do you think Rosetta's age and sexual inexperience made her more vulnerable to sexual assault? If so, how did her boyfriend prey on these vulnerabilities before the assault?
3. In *NO!* Rosetta says that she was sexually aroused by her boyfriend during the assault even though she repeatedly asked him to stop. Does her arousal change her consent or our opinion about whether or not she is a victim of sexual assault?
4. Even though an orgasm does not indicate whether a sexual experience is consensual, why do you think a survivor of sexual assault is often confused by her body's response if an orgasm occurs during the attack?
5. Why do you think that, unlike most other crimes, many people tend to blame sexual assault victims for their attacks?
6. Why do you think sexual assault victims often blame themselves for their attacks?
7. How can we help other members of society and sexual assault victims better understand that their attacks were not self-induced but rather illegal crimes committed against them?
8. Rosetta states after her assault she went home and forced herself to vomit. She has been a bulimic ever since. Why do you think sexual assault can impair one's short-term and long-term physical well-being? Their short-term and long-term psychological well-being? Their body image? Their self-esteem?
9. How do you think sexual assault affects the social relationships that victims have after their attacks?

DVD Chapter
Stop: 43:27

Adolescent Sexual Abuse and Prevention

"If we don't break the silence around that, around little Black girls being sexually abused and assaulted, then what we say, in essence in our silence is, Here have my little Black girl child and murder her emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually and I'll sit and say nothing. That the biggest betrayal that any child in the world can have."

– Rev. Renae McNeal, Imani Revelations



Photo by Gail Lloyd

MYTH

If adolescent girls are not sexually active, then they will not be raped.

FACT

Only the perpetrator is responsible for his/her criminal actions. No one wants or asks to be sexually assaulted. However, adolescent girls are at a higher risk for sexual violence than girls in any other age group. Part of the reason for this is the large number of date/acquaintance rapes which occur at this age. This is coupled with the fact that many adolescents are victims of sexual abuse and incest as well.

SYNOPSIS

In *NO!* Rosetta Williams describes the sexual assault she experienced when she twelve years old. At the time of her assault, she was dating a much older boy from her neighborhood that repeatedly pressured her into having sex with him. After she was raped, she returned home and told her mother what happened. Neither Rosetta nor her mother reported the crime.

DEFINITION

Date Rape is a form of acquaintance rape, when someone is raped by someone they have dated or are dating. As a sex crime, date rape includes forced, manipulated, or coerced sexual contact.

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. About 54% of rapes that women experience occur before they turn 18. Why do you think that adolescents are so vulnerable to sexual assault?
2. What different social and peer pressures do you think adolescents feel that render them more vulnerable to sexual abuse?
3. Why do you think Rosetta's mother did not report the crime to the police?
4. In what ways can parents, family members, friends, or lovers immediately help sexual assault victims after they have been attacked? What constitutes a negative response? A positive response?
5. What do you think Rosetta meant when she said that because her mother was not protected while growing up, and thus her mother did not know how to protect Rosetta "for real?"
6. How and why are young boys raised to defend themselves from physical attacks differently from how young girls are raised to defend themselves?
7. Given the frequency of sexual assault perpetrated against adolescent girls, why do you think there are so few resources to help this population?
8. How do you think the race, gender, sexuality, and class of the victim impacts the number of violence prevention programs and treatment resources that are available to them?

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Incest

DVD Chapter Stop: 43:27

"I look at pre-sexual, knee-socked girls on buses and wonder how many of them live with secrets of rape and incest. When I pass through Black communities and see daycare centers and school yards filled with Black and Brown and a few White children running and pushing in play, a sadness sweeps over me as I realize that many of them don't have a vocabulary for the atrocities already performed on their unknowing, unwilling bodies."

—Charlotte Pierce-Baker, Ph.D., author of *Surviving the Silence: Black Women's Stories Of Rape*

MYTH

Most sexual assaults experienced during childhood are committed by strangers in isolated locations.

FACT

The overwhelming majority of children are assaulted by a person whom they know and trust, often in their own homes or the offender's home. Victims of incest are boys and girls, infants and adolescents. Incest occurs between fathers and daughters, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, and mothers and sons. Perpetrators of incest can be aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, siblings, stepsiblings, and grandparents.

SYNOPSIS

Although the documentary *NO!* does not deal with this topic in great depth, Charlotte Pierce-Baker and Renae McNeal discuss the prevalence of incest in the African-American community. Reading from her book, *Surviving the Silence: Black Women's Stories of Rape*, Charlotte describes the feelings of sadness she experiences when she sees young children playing because she knows so many of them have been sexually assaulted but are unable to tell anyone. Renae talks about how communities put young girls at risk for sexual assault and incest because people are more willing to protect assailants than hold them accountable and report them.

DEFINITION

Incest is the sexual abuse of a child by a relative or other person in a position of trust and authority over the child. A child molested by a stranger can run home for help and comfort; a victim of incest cannot. Incest has been cited as the most common form of child abuse. Studies conclude that 43% of the children who are abused are abused by family members, 33% are abused by someone they know, and the remaining 24% are sexually abused by strangers. Other research indicates that over 10 million Americans have been victims of incest.



Charlotte Pierce-Baker; photo by Wadia L. Gardiner

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why would a child feel uncomfortable telling an adult about his/her sexual assault?
2. Why do you think victims of incest are less likely to come forward than victims of other sexual crimes?
3. What responsibility do parents have in talking to their children about incest and child sexual abuse?
4. What do you think are some of the indicators of incest? If you suspect a child is being sexually assaulted in his/her home, what are some steps you should do to minimize the devastating effects of incest?
5. In *NO!* Renae says that families would rather remain silent about the sexual assault of young girls rather than confront their perpetrators. What do you think the long-term impact of this "silence" will have on the child victim? What message does this "silence" send to young girls about their sexuality and their self-worth?
6. How does a family's silence around incest condone the behavior of the perpetrators of incest and sexual assault?
7. What do you think are the unique challenges incest survivors face during their recovery and healing processes?



Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, Nikki Harmon and Kia Steave Dickerson; photo by Wadia L. Gardiner

Chapter 6



Essex Hemphill; photo by Charlene Gilbert

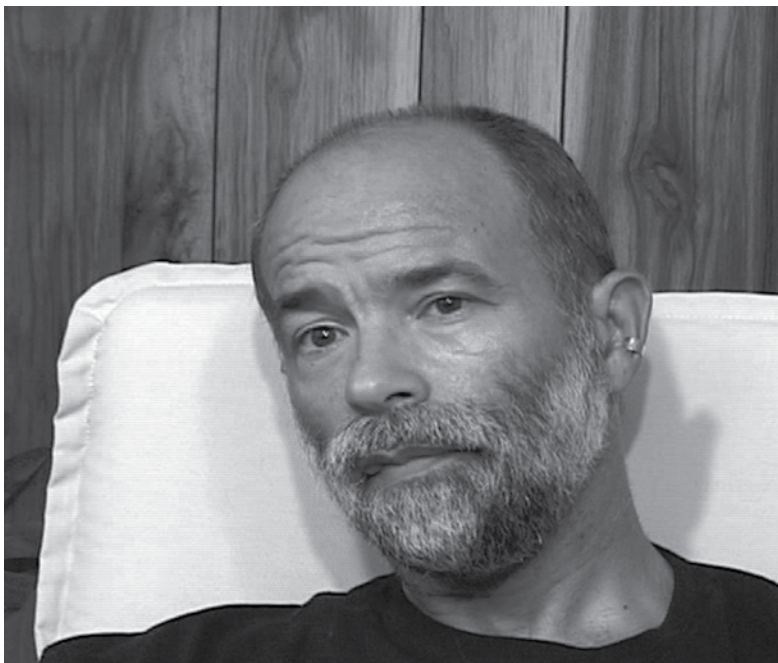
Holding Men Accountable

Intraracial Betrayal and Sexual Assault

DVD Chapter
Stop: 50:25

"How do we develop in a way that she does not have to be responsible for his receiving consequences for what he's done. Because what we know after all that if they're no consequences for me I will continue to do what I am doing."

—Sulaiman Nuriddin, Men Stopping Violence, Inc.



Sulaiman Nuriddin; photo by Joan Brannon

MYTH

Rape is mostly an interracial crime

FACT

In about 88% of forcible rapes, the victim and the offenders were of the same race.

SYNOPSIS

In *NO!* Janelle White describes being sexually assaulted by her male roommate during the period that she was "coming out" as a lesbian. Before the assault, she and her perpetrator were good friends who worked together on a series of anti-racism projects on their predominantly White campus. Although it took her almost an entire year to disclose, Janelle eventually told her first female partner about her rape. The emotional and psychological toll of the assault was so strong that Janelle eventually had to check herself into the hospital to assist her in her recovery process. During that time, her female partner confronted her assailant.

DEFINITION

Intraracial Rape is a sexual assault in which the victim and the offender are of the same race.

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Given that Janelle's assailant was her roommate, we can assume that he was a person that she had trusted and befriended. How does his raping of her contradict the myth that rape could be prevented if women dressed less provocatively and avoided dark alleys and other "dangerous" places?
2. How did the racial identity of her assailant affect Janelle's decision not to report her assault?
3. Did the racial climate of the university influence Janelle's decision to not report her assault? In what ways?
4. How do you think being sexual assaulted adversely affected her "coming out" process?
5. What difficulties do you think Janelle faced in disclosing her story to others? What affect do you think not disclosing for almost a year had on her healing process?
6. Honorée Jeffers's poem "that's proof that she wanted it" refers to multiple instances in which a rapist justifies his violent assault of a woman. What are ways that men might justify violent behavior and sexual assault? What are ways that as a society we justify the violent behavior of men?

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DVD Chapter
Stop: 56:17

Black Feminist Men and the Anti-Rape Movement

"It's not enough to be a principled person with women.

You have an obligation to challenge the behavior of your peers."

—Michael Simmons, International Human Rights Activist

MYTH

Men cannot hold other men accountable for rape.

FACT

Given that men commit the majority of sexual assaults, *all* men have a disproportionate amount of power in our society. They carry a responsibility to change sexist behavior, challenge their peers, and prevent and end rape.

SYNOPSIS

In *NO!* Janelle White says that after her sexual assault, she told one of her close Black male friends. Instead of disbelieving her, this friend responded in a way that supported her healing process: He confronted her perpetrator with whom he was friends. Yet, rather than reprimand him, Janelle's friend held her perpetrator accountable by challenging him to change his sexually violent behavior, make amends, and seek counseling. Unlike too many responses to sexual assault that blame the victim, Janelle's friend did not blame her for the rape, but held her perpetrator responsible for his actions instead.

DEFINITION

Accountability is a readiness to have one's actions judged by others. When appropriate, it also means being able to accept responsibility for unjust actions and misjudgments, and recognizing the need to change in the light of improved understanding gained from others.



Michael Simmons; photo by Joan Brannon

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can men become more active in the anti-rape movement? What are some of the internal and external pressures that inhibit many men from become stronger allies in the fight to end sexual violence?
2. Why do you think African-American heterosexual men are underrepresented in the anti-rape movement? How can their visibility and participation be increased?
3. What stereotypes about Black masculinity and Black female sexuality need to be challenged in order to create more intraracial solidarity around ending sexual violence?
4. What are some of the challenges that men face when confronting other men about sexism and sexual violence?
5. Why do you think Janelle's male friend confronted her perpetrator? Was this an effective strategy?

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Black Leaders and Sexual Violence

DVD Chapter
Stop: 56:44

"Imagine if all of us thought it was unthinkable to assault women what might happen, if the judge thought that, if the pastor thought that. These are individuals, for example, we often refer to as reality definers. They have the power to shape norms."

—Ulester Douglas, Men Stopping Violence, Inc.

MYTH

All rape victims report the crime immediately to the police. If they do not report it or delay in reporting it, then they must not have been raped. Either they made up the stories because they're mad at their boyfriends, they're trying to stay out of trouble with their parents, or they want to extort money from the guys.

FACT

There are many reasons why a rape victim may not report the assault to the police. Only 3-in-10 rapes are reported to law enforcement. The experience of retelling what happened may force the person to relive the trauma. Other reasons for not immediately reporting the assault—or not reporting it at all—include fear of retaliation by the offender, fear of not being believed, fear of being blamed for the assault, and fear of being "re-victimized."

SYNOPSIS

In *NO!* Aaronette M. White describes an acquaintance rape experience that took place when she was twenty years old in which she visits the apartment of a senior-level college administrator for whom she was an undergraduate research assistant. At his apartment, when he began to kiss her, Aaronette refused his sexual advances and expressed discomfort with the situation by saying, "I don't think we should be doing this." Instead of listening to her repeated pleas of "no," he proceeded to undress her, ridicule her by remarking that "you act like those silly little White girls who complain of rape," and sexually assault her. When she returned to her dorm room and sought help from another African-American administrator on campus, he told her, "Don't tell anyone. He is the highest ranking Black professional on campus."

DEFINITION

Patriarchy is a family, community, society, and nation based on a system in which men govern and have authority over women and children. While patriarchy refers to gender and sexual inequality that privileges men over women, it maintains male authority through individual, collective, legal, and institutional behaviors.



Aaronette M. White; photo by Scheherazade Tillet

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Using the definition of rape, what makes Aaronette's experience sexual assault?
2. Given that she was an undergraduate and her perpetrator was a college administrator, in what ways did he have authority over her before and after the assault?
3. Describe the varied ways that he first exercised and then misused his authority over her. How did his verbally taunting of her make Aaronette feel like she had no grounds to file a complaint?
4. When Aaronette sought help from another African-American administrator, he told her not to tell anyone else. Why do you think he said this? How did it further silence and traumatize her?
5. What obstacles would Aaronette have had to face in order to report the assault and press charges? What impact do you think her lack of campus support had on her short-term and long-term recovery process?

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"Imagine the strength of that man. You know, the heavyweight champion. Nobody wanted to talk about that.

It was, "What was she doing in his room?"

—Johnnetta Betsch Cole, Ph.D., President, Bennett College for Women

MYTH

If a woman goes to someone's room or house, or accompanies him to a bar, she takes on the risk of being sexually assaulted. If something happens later, she can't claim that she was raped or sexually assaulted because she should have known not to go to those places.

FACT

Women have the legal right to enter a man's hotel room, car, and home and not be raped. Rape is never the victim's fault for it is a crime of violence and control that stems from the perpetrator's determination to exercise power over another. Furthermore, neither a person's clothing nor behavior is an invitation for unwanted sexual activity. Forcing someone to engage in non-consensual sexual activity is rape, regardless of the way that person dresses or acts.

SYNOPSIS

NO! examines the response amongst prominent African-American leaders about the conviction of boxer Mike Tyson in February 1992 for the rape of Miss Black Rhode Island Desiree Washington in an Indianapolis hotel room in 1991. Even though the court sentenced him to serve six years, he was released in May 1995 after only serving three years. Despite the fact that both the accuser, Desiree Washington,

and the defendant, Mike Tyson, were African-Americans, many African-American leaders such as Minister Louis Farrakhan and Rev. T.J. Jemison, and other community members (mostly men) automatically believed that Mike Tyson was either: completely innocent; being set up because he was a Black celebrity athlete; or could not control his sexual urges and thereby not be responsible for the rape. Furthermore, many of these same people publicly ridiculed and blamed Desiree Washington for her sexual assaulted because she went to "Mike Tyson's hotel room at 2:00 a.m."



Johnnetta Betsch Cole; photo by Joan Brannon

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did so many African-American men and women automatically think Mike Tyson was innocent and that Desiree Washington was lying?
2. Why and how did many African-American leaders hold Desiree Washington responsible for Mike Tyson's actions?
3. How do you think the ridicule levied by African-Americans at Desiree Washington and stereotypes of Black women as liars and sexually promiscuous prevent Black women from reporting when they have been sexually assaulted?
4. Unlike other victims of violent crimes, rape victims are often held responsible for preventing their assaults. What double standard is created when we hold women as opposed to their assailants responsible for their sexual assault experiences?
5. Using a model of intraracial solidarity that is not dependent on patriarchy, what type of support should Black women who have been raped by African-American men expect? How does that differ from what happens today?

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"Unfortunately, many leaders of Black communities, who are often clergy, stand with Black males even Black males who have committed, even in some cases as in the case of Mike Tyson, have been convicted of raping Black women. It's a tremendous betrayal of Black Women."

—Rev. Traci West, Ph.D., author of *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence and Resistance Ethics*

MYTH

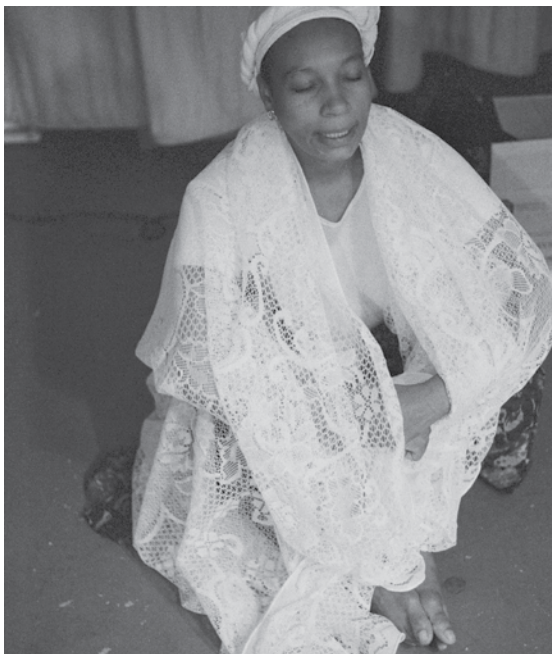
If a person consents to have sex at the start of making out with their partner, then changes their mind but their partner keeps going, it is not an assault.

FACT

Legally a person has the right to change her mind about having sex at any point of sexual contact. If a sexual partner does not stop at the time a person says "no," this is sexual assault. If a person is in a relationship with someone or has had sex with a person before, this does not mean that they cannot be assaulted by that person. Consent must be given every time two people engage in sexual contact.

DEFINITION

Victim-Blaming is holding the victims of sexually-based crimes responsible for their having been assaulted. In many instances of acquaintance rape, the victims are said to have "asked for it" and encouraged their rape because they were flirting, wearing sexually provocative clothing, or intoxicated.



'Mother Spirit'; photo by Wadia L. Gardiner

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When Minister Louis Farrakhan claims that women say no but mean yes, does his statement contradict the definition of rape?
2. When Farrakhan states to his female audience that, "You're not dealing with a man that don't know you and the damn deceitful games that you play," what stereotypes about Black female sexuality does he invoke in order to condone Mike Tyson's behavior?
3. In the prayer service that Rev. T.J. Jemison's leads for Mike Tyson, he says that, "We cannot destroy anybody to build up another body." Who do you think he believes is being destroyed by the sexual assault charges? In what ways does Jemison either ignore or minimize the negative impact that both the rape and the subsequent legal proceedings had on Desiree Washington?
4. How do both Farrakhan and Jemison use "victim-blaming" statements to further penalize Desiree Washington for being raped?
5. Why do many members of the Black community consider Black women who come forward with charges of intraracial rape to be bigger a threat to the African-American community than their rapists?
6. Given the high incidence of sexual assault in the United States, many religious leaders, such as ministers and imams, have a significant number of female rape victims already in their congregations. What responsibilities do these leaders, who more often than not are male, have to these women? In what ways can religious leaders help rape victims overcome their assaults?
7. Given the high incidence of sexual assault in the United States, many religious leaders, like ministers and imams, have a significant number of perpetrators already in their congregations. In what ways can religious leaders hold these men responsible for their crimes?

Media, Stereotypes, and a Rape Culture

"Things like gangsta rap, stereotypes about Black women, create this hostile environment where women's lives, Black women's lives are not respected. If you're going around for instance, calling Black women names, or putting Black women down, it's easy to make the next leap to disrespect this Black woman."

—Aaronette M. White, Ph.D., Social Psychologist and Activist

MYTH

Women lie about being sexually assaulted to become famous and rich, to seek revenge, or because they feel guilty afterward about having had sex.

FACT

Women rarely make false reports about sexual assault. Acquaintance rape is the most underreported crime in the United States. As well, false accusations of sexual assault are made no more often than false reports of other types of crime are made: about 2% to 4%, which means 96% to 98% of the reports are true.

DEFINITION

Rape Culture describes a society in which sexual violence is common and in which prevailing attitudes, norms, practices, and media messages justify, excuse, or encourage sexually-based crimes. Many feminists argue that in a rape culture, acts of "harmless" sexism are oftentimes engaged to validate and perpetuate misogynistic practices; for example, sexist jokes and stereotypes may be used to promote disrespect for women and disregard for their safety, which ultimately makes their being sexually abused seem acceptable and normal.

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Essex Hemphill's poem, "To Some Supposed Brothers," he says that men "judge" women by the "length of her skirt / by the way she walks, / talks, looks, and act." What stereotypes about a woman do people often assume by what she is wearing and how she behaves? How are some of these stereotypes used to denigrate Black women who come forward and state they are victims of sexual assault?
2. Think of the number of jokes and songs that are used as slurs to describe women. How are the terms such as "bitches," "hoes," and "sluts" used to deride women? Why are there no male-directed counterparts to these terms?
3. What does Hemphill mean when he says, "We so-called men, / we so-called brothers / wonder why its so hard to love 'our' women / when we're about loving them / the way America / loves us?"
4. Write a list of terms used to describe women who are sexually assertive, socially aggressive, and professionally ambitious. Then write a list of terms used to characterize men who are sexually assertive, socially aggressive, and professionally ambitious. Why do you think there are substantially fewer derogatory words that come to mind to describe men who assert themselves sexually and professionally? How do these terms and the images of women with which we associate them reveal and perpetuate sexist attitudes?
5. In what ways do men, including Black men, have substantially more sexual freedom than Black women? How do industries that propagate pornography, prostitution, and sexually violent music and movies perpetuate sexism? How do they encourage men to be more sexually aggressive against women?
6. Can you name five films or television shows that deal explicitly with the theme of rape? How are the victims portrayed before their rape? How are they portrayed after their assaults? How are the perpetrators portrayed? Which films or television shows do better jobs at minimizing victim-blaming statements? Which do not invoke stereotypes that explain rape as a direct result of women's immoral behavior?
7. Why are women held more responsible for being raped than their male perpetrators? Does holding women responsible for crimes committed against them deter men from raping? How does it encourage men to continue to sexually assault women in order to exert power and control?
8. How do men use rape to control and to police women's sexual, economic, and political independence?
9. How can the entertainment industry help create and promote an anti-rape culture?

NO!

Chapter 7



Farah Jasmine Griffin; photo by Scheherazade Tillet

Unequal Justice Under Law

Sexual Assault and the Criminal System

DVD Chapter
Stop: 69:28

"Black women are the ones who get the least justice when it comes to these rape convictions."

—Aaronette M. White, Ph.D., Social Psychologist and Activist



Audree Irons; photo by Joan Brannon

MYTH

Rape can be avoided if women avoid dark alleys or other "dangerous" places where strangers might be hiding or lurking.

FACT

Rape and sexual assault can occur at any time, in many places, and to anyone. According to a report based on FBI data, almost 70% of sexual assault reported to law enforcement occurred in a residence belonging to the victim, the offender, or another individual.

SYNOPSIS

In *NO!* Audree Irons describes a stranger rape experience in which a man breaks into her apartment, coerces her by holding a knife to her throat, and sexually assaults her. He not only threatens her safety but also states that he will harm her children unless she cooperates. After he assaults her, he then warns her that he will return and rape her again. Although she reported the crime, the police never made any formal arrests. Audree then proceeded to investigate the crime on her own and eventually located the name and the whereabouts of a potential suspect. Even though she forwarded the information to the police officers assigned to her case, they never arrested, charged, or prosecuted anyone.

DEFINITION

Stranger Rape is non-consensual or forced sex, committed by a person who is a complete stranger to the victim

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Using the definition of rape, what makes Audree's experience sexual assault?
2. In addition to exerting physical force, what did Audree's assailant do to threaten her well being?
3. In her testimony Audree says that she tried protecting her children by not giving "the guy any trouble." What did she mean by that? How is sexual assault as much as physical violation as it is a psychological one?
4. Unlike many of the other women in the film, Audree immediately reported her crime to the police. Why do you think victims of stranger rapes are more likely to report their assaults to the police and seek medical attention for their injuries than victims of acquaintance and date rape?
5. How does Audree's experience challenge the stereotype that rape victims can prevent their assaults if they wear less provocative clothing, are less sexually promiscuous, and avoid dangerous areas?
6. Audree was able to learn more information about her assailant because she described him to her neighbor; however, she believes that the police did not follow up on her lead. What would make Audree believe that the police would not follow up on such a lead? If this is true, why would they not follow up?
7. If the police are not going to respond in an effective and efficient manner to claims of sexual assault, what are other ways a victim can respond? How can the community respond? What other forms of accountability can a community pursue outside of or working alongside the American judicial system?

DVD Chapter
Stop: 72:03

Disparities in the American Judicial System

"You know W.E.B. Du Bois said 'To be poor is a hardship, but to be poor in the land of dollars is the bottom of hardships,' and to be poor and Black and female in America is about the bottom of all that because we are so irrelevant, that's why we can be raped. What difference does it make? It's only some Black woman."

—Elaine Brown, Former Chairperson Black Panther Party

MYTH

The majority of sexual offenders are caught, convicted, and in prison.

FACT

Only a fraction of those who commit sexual assault are apprehended and convicted for their crimes. Most convicted sex offenders eventually are released to the community under probation or parole supervision.

SYNOPSIS

In *NO!* Aaronette M. White notes that despite the fact that Black men are not raping more than White men, they receive more severe and longer sentences. The racial disparities in arrest, prosecution, and sentencing are not only limited to race of the assailants, but also determined by the race of the victims. While most rapes are intraracial, the highest number of convictions are for Black men who are accused of raping White women. The lowest convictions are for White men who are accused of raping Black women. These racial disparities indicate that White women get more justice than their Black female counterparts.



Adrienne Davis; photo by Scheherazade Tillet

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does racial stereotyping and the myth of the Black male rapist influence how the criminal justice system treats African-American men accused of raping White women?
2. Why do you think that White men receive shorter sentences for sexually assaulting Black women than they do for sexually assaulting White women?
3. How does racial stereotyping and the myth of Black female sexuality influence how the criminal justice system responds to White men accused of raping a Black woman?
4. Do you think that members of the African-American community are more likely to believe a Black woman when she says that she has been raped by White man than when she says a Black man has raped her? What explains the difference between these responses?
5. Why do you think Black women often feel guilty about pressing charges against Black men for sexual assault? What type of treatment should Black women expect from their community if they have been sexually assaulted? What about from the criminal justice system?
6. Given the fact that racism is deeply entrenched within the criminal justice system, how does this affect how many African-Americans feel about Black women who accuse Black men of rape? How does this influence the decision of Black women to come forward and report that they are victims of rape, if their perpetrators are Black?

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Chapter 8



The cast of "A Stage of Rage," photo by Wadia L. Gardiner

Healing, Faith, and Hope

Activism and Recovery

DVD Chapter
Stop: 72:50

"The one thing I would really encourage people to do is to at least talk to someone. Find someone who you feel you can tell what happened. Because it does change your life when you're able to voice it, to just speak it. If it's even just that."

—Janelle White, Ph.D., Sociologist and Activist

MYTH

A person who really has been sexually assaulted will afterward be hysterical.

FACT

It is a common misperception that victims will show a certain type of response. Survivors exhibit a range of emotional responses to assault such as calm, hysteria, laughter, anger, apathy, and shock. There is no "right way" to react to being sexually assaulted. Assumptions about the way a victim should act may be detrimental to the victim because each victim copes with the trauma of the assault in different ways, which also can vary over time.

SYNOPSIS

In *NO!* Audree Irons, Janelle White, Loretta Ross, and Salamishah Tillet discuss their processes of coming forward about being raped and the advent of their political activist work. Audree notes that she went to counseling two years after her assault, but feels that if she went immediately after her assault she might have healed earlier. Loretta reveals that she was raped when she eleven years old and became pregnant as a result of incest when she was fifteen years old. However, as part of her healing, she became a leading anti-rape activist, and in the 1970s, she helped found the D.C. Rape Crisis Center. In addition to seeking psychological help; Janelle began educating others about sexual violence by teaching the class "Our Silence Will Not Protect Us, Black Women Confronting Sexual and Domestic Violence." Lastly, Salamishah discusses volunteering for the Men's Task Force at Women's Organized Against Rape in Philadelphia and becoming actively involved in her campus's Take Back the Night activities. All of these women emphasize the importance of activism as a tool in healing.

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think Audree means when she says that if she went to counseling right after her assault she probably would have healed faster? Given that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms can appear immediately after an assault, how would therapy have helped alleviate those initial symptoms? What are some the cultural, social, and economic difficulties that women of color may face when trying to find a therapist?
2. What does Audree mean when she says, "I may have been victimized but I'm a survivor?" What do you think it means to be a rape survivor and no longer a rape victim?
3. Of her son, Loretta says she knows "exactly how hard it is to both love your child and to hate the circumstances from which he was born." What are the *unique* challenges that women experience after a perpetrator sexually assaults and then impregnates them?
4. Why do you think Loretta was drawn to political work around issues of sexual violence? What are some of the personal hardships that rape victims experience because of their anti-rape activism? How does the work help them heal?
5. Janelle emphasizes the need to "break silence" and "speak out" as essential components to healing. Why do you think disclosure is such a necessary part of the healing process? What constitutes a "safe space" to disclose?
6. Salamishah joined the Men's Task Force in order to help educate young boys and men about safe sex practices and to identify unhealthy sexual attitudes about girls and women. Whose responsibility should rape prevention and gender education be? Do you think rape victims should be responsible for sexual assault education and prevention? Or do you think all members of society should have that responsibility?
7. What are some of the challenges that women of color face in their attempts to locate resources, tools, marches, and rallies that speak to their unique experiences as rape survivors and women? How have many of the survivors in *NO!* used their activism to further embrace all aspects of their identity? What are some resources now available to women of color who are survivors of violence? What types of resources do you think should be available that are not presently provided?

"I wanted to give back to women who have been through this ordeal as myself because I felt I was getting better and could help someone else through this process."

– Audree Irons, Administrative Associate, Spelman College



Tamara L. Xavier/ Moon Wisdom; photo by Tina Morton

MYTH

"No one will ever believe that I have been raped."

FACT

There are number of local resources to which victims of sexual violence can turn if they have been sexually assaulted. These often include: rape crisis centers, hospitals, women's centers, therapists, teachers, close friends, and mentors. However, because rape victims often feel "re-victimized" by people who do not believe them, it is important to listen to and support women and girls who assert that they have been raped.

SYNOPSIS

In *NO!* sisters Salamishah and Scheherazade Tillet discuss their creation of the multimedia performance *A Story of A Rape (SOARS)* and their founding of their arts-based non-profit A Long Walk Home, Inc. Scheherazade photographed Salamishah's recovery, and in *SOARS*, through a showing of black and white photography, alongside music, dance, and poetry, they offer the public a rare access into the very private world of rape, its aftermath for victims, and the post-trauma healing process. Through its powerful imagery, *SOARS* breaks the overwhelming silence that accompanies sexual violence. This multimedia performance has empowered women of color and underserved populations on a national front.

DEFINITION

Art Therapy is the therapeutic use of art-making, within a professional relationship, by people who experience illness, trauma, or challenges in living, and by people who seek personal development.

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think sharing one's story with other victims of sexual assault is helpful? What are some of the internal and external challenges that rape victims have to overcome in order to share their testimonies with others?
2. How do you think sexual assault affects the family members of rape victims? Their significant others? What positive impact can family members and significant others play in the healing process?
3. What are the unique benefits of incorporating the arts into the healing and recovery process?
4. How do you think documenting, whether through photography, video, or journaling helps victims of sexual violence heal?
5. What are the differences, if any between, the terms "rape victim" and "rape survivor?"

"I think that the most important thing that a person can do in the healing process is to be patient with themselves and to love themselves in the process."

—Rev. Reanae McNeal, Imani Revelations

MYTH

When sexually aroused to a certain degree, men lose control, and have to have it.

FACT

Studies of convicted offenders indicate the majority of sexual assaults are premeditated. The brain controls all of our behavior, including sexual urges.

SYNOPSIS

In its closing sequence, *NO!* underscores the positive relationship that religious institutions can have in the lives of rape victims. Specifically, Rev. Traci West and Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons discuss how they both respectively interpret passages from the Bible and the Qur'an to support women's rights and to end rape, rather than use these religious books to justify the oppression of women. Following their lead, Sulaiman Nuriddin challenges religious and community leaders to become more actively involved in the anti-rape movement by holding their male congregants/fellow citizens publicly responsible for violent behavior toward women. Through questioning and challenging the criminal (in)justice system, the African-American community itself as Janelle White, Johnnetta Betsch Cole, and John Dickerson note, can and should create their own codes of accountability by which all members must abide.



Rev. Reanae McNeal; photo by Wadia L. Gardiner

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What tenets of Christianity are applicable when condemning acts of violence against women?
2. What tenets of Islam are applicable when condemning acts of violence against women?
3. How can religious beliefs and spiritual practices help survivor's overcome the trauma of sexual violence?
4. When Sulaiman describes "the community effect" as a deterrent of sexual violence, what does he mean? What roles should religious and community leaders play in ending sexual violence?
5. Given the low rates of incarceration for sexual crimes, what other forms of accountability can community members impose on men who have sexually assaulted women and girls?
6. How does the statistic that says 1-in-3 women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime reveal that rape is not only a woman's issue, but also a larger cultural and political issue within the African-American community? How does rape within the African-American community further devastate racial progress?
7. When Michael Simmons says that the trauma he experienced after being robbed is nothing compared to that of being raped, what does he reveal about the long-term emotional trauma of rape on the individual victim?



Tamara L. Xavier and Aishah; photo by Tina Morton