

If a Man

commits

R A P E

in Newtown

and no one

knows how to

deal with it...

**RAPE / A RAPIST IS A TRIGGER FOR RAPE VICTIMS,
REGARDLESS OF HOW LONG AGO OR HOW MANY TIMES THE
RAPIST RAPED OR HOW MANY TIMES THE VICTIM WAS
RAPED.**

"Rape is the worst kind of crime – when a woman's body is used as a weapon against her, she can never, ever, escape that weapon because it will always be a part of her."

"I can never fully recover from the damage that's been done to me. So for me, any space with someone who has raped in it is not a safe space."

"To a rape victim, being around a person who has raped another person is not a safe space, no matter how many times they raped or how long ago. The community should respect that."

"Ask me how much longer I can go on like this. Ask me how I'm supposed to sleep at night knowing that you've put a woman through living hell. Ask me how I can live knowing how many women are walking around feeling his breath on their neck, feeling broken, feeling guilty, feeling powerless."

"By raping someone, you take their power from them. You take their safety from them. You take their body from them. As a rapist, you have taken something you can never give back."

All of this will take time. Addressing rape will be a slow process and will not occur overnight. We cannot skip this process though, or else we fail the victims of rape as well as ourselves and each other. We fail our communities if we do not actively and sincerely take on the hard work of actively dealing with rape.

An introduction:

This zine was adapted from the zine "If A Man Commits Rape In Isla Vista And No One Is About To Stop It... Then Did It Ever Really Happen?" I came across it when dealing with my own rape, and the sentiments expressed were frighteningly similar to my experience of being raped and of trying to address it in an activist/anarchist/radical identified community. I felt validated and also enraged reading it, knowing that something as horrible as rape and getting away with it could be so common in communities that claim to stand against sexual assault and gendered violence. I want to give credit to the folks that wrote that zine, and who expressed so adequately some of the primary issues surrounding dealing with rape in our communities. It provided a template for me to also be able to voice my own experiences. So thank you for writing and thank you for speaking out! And **THANK YOU** also to the few amazing, strong, courageous and badass people who supported me through this, near and far. You're my superheroes. Molly Rage

A Disclaimer:

I doubt this zine will come as a surprise to anyone who's been in touch with me over the past several months, because everyone knows how damaging this process of trying to address the rape has been for me. But for some reason I still feel the need to give the following disclaimer: This wasn't written as an attack on the people who have tried to make an accountability process work, but rather as a desperate plea to put in the work to set up structures and networks that can effectively address sexual assault within our communities so that other survivors don't have to go through such a horrible experience.

I think it's sad that I even feel obliged to include a disclaimer before speaking up about all of this, and I think that's a big part of the problem. This whole thing – the rape and the attempted processes to address it, have had such an air of silence, as if I'm not supposed to talk openly about my experiences. It seems whenever I talk openly about how bad this has been for me (either being raped or being re-traumatized by the failed accountability processes) people automatically start feeling attacked and immediately begin defending themselves and each other, instead of just listening and hearing what I'm trying to say. That has made speaking up the hardest. That's been the most silencing thing for me.

These things are always going to be hard and messy. That's because we live in a rape-culture and we're not raised with any structures for emotionally or practically dealing with rape when it happens. And when we do try to address rape in any sort of active way, we're pushing up against the resistance of an entire power structure that relies on rape as a tool of domination to keep this system in place. So for me, talking about this openly and honestly is necessary. It's something that I *need* to do.

So whoever you are as a reader, whether you're involved in this directly or not, I'm asking that you try hearing my words for what they are.

***Trigger warning for this zine, as it deals directly with the subject of rape.**

***Gendered language disclaimer, as the rape was a cis-man who raped a cis-woman.**

***Find the original zine at <http://zinelibrary.info/if-man-commits-rape-iv-and-no-one-about-stop-it-then-did-it-ever-really-happen>**

***Check out rapeisreal.wordpress.com for more info.**

Dear Friends, Allies, Enemies & Other Members of This Community,

A man in this community has raped. A man in this community has raped, and every day I have to live with the knowledge of that. I've been told not to talk about this openly, and I've been guilted into being silent for a long time because of the climate of privacy and secrecy that surrounds rape within our communities. People have come forward to voice support, but many have done it privately, anonymously, for fear of retribution against them in this community or else because the subject is triggering of their own rape experience.

So I wanted to address a few things about the public call-out of Ben McCullagh-Dennis. I've heard people say that I'm viewing him as a one-dimensional person, that I'm painting an unfair picture of him, that I'm not giving him a chance to tell his side of the story, that I'm spreading gossip, that I don't have "proof," and that this is nothing more than a smear campaign.

I don't care about his side of the story. And my proof is having been raped by him.

I've been in counselling because I was experiencing symptoms of PTSD after Ben held me down and forcibly raped me. The experience terrified me, because it happened in a relationship that was supposed to be safe and in a community that was supposed to stand against rape. I know from Ben's own admittance that he's assaulted other women. I've begun to tell women about him so that they can protect themselves. He has raped. He is a rapist. And yet people haven't seemed to be taking this seriously. They have been listening to his cover-story that it was a mistake, that he hasn't raped, that he would never rape. Only after other folks have started to come forward publicly and share similar experiences with Ben has his community begun to understand what I've been trying to tell them. This has been more hurtful than I can ever describe. Ben is a rapist. Ben raped me. Why isn't my experience enough to take this seriously? Why isn't one rape enough?

For months his community has been dismissing this, avoiding me. I guess it's much easier to listen to the voice of a perpetrator than to the desperate emotions of a survivor. I want my innocence back, and I want back the innocence of everyone Ben's hurt. It's time to reclaim our voices and to reclaim our communities. Every man who rapes deserves what's coming to him, and now people like Ben will finally begin to see some consequences.

"If he thinks that rape is so terrible, then he should be encouraging his victims to report him and he should turn himself in. He needs to make it clear that no exceptions should be made for him as opposed to other rapists that we don't know. He needs to make it clear to each of his victims that they are not the only victims of his, that his "remorse" after the first time he committed the acts and every time he has committed the acts thereafter was not enough to make him stop. Let's momentarily take that leap of faith and entertain the idea (as he says) that Ben is only capable of rape as a "mistake" or a "misunderstanding." This means that for Ben, he is incapable of understanding consent and of understanding the word "no" when used in a sexual context. This means that he is incapable of knowing when to stop and how to not rape another person. This means that for Ben, to make the decision to be in a sexual relationship is to make the decision to rape."

Dear Sydney Community (Part 1),

I'm afraid to visit your community because I don't want to face the fact that people there just don't seem to give half as much of a shit about this as I do. They don't seem to understand the rape, but they will pretend they do in order to "fix the rapist" and get away with not taking pre-emptive action against him. They think that they know how to fix a rapist, although probably none of them have the capacity to forcibly rape someone else, they haven't been rehabilitated yet because they haven't been there in the first place, nor are they trained social workers, but they will still say that their plan of action is to work with the rapist to change his ugly mindset because, ultimately, that will stop more rapes from occurring. This belief in reforming the rapist is maintained, even though the true story of how he raped is not even believed. How can they plan to change the mindset of the rapist while allowing him to continue lying about his capacity to rape? How long will they believe that he simply made a mistake and that he is incapable of violent pre-meditated rape? How can they attempt to work with him when they don't even know him?

They will soon forget to follow through. They will get wrapped up in their studies, their jobs, their social lives and their other (more important) activism, and will not be able to dedicate the extreme amount of time necessary to rehabilitate a repeat offender of rape. They may share coffee with the rapist once or twice to find out what his "side of the story" is. And at the point when Ben McCullagh-Dennis says that he can't really remember what happened and that he's only made a mistake and is sorry for it, they will have nowhere else to turn except to go on with their lives because it's not like he actually raped any of their girlfriends. They've washed their hands of it.

When will someone understand that Ben will always deny to the face of radicals any of the beliefs and assumptions that led him to justify and commit those rapes in the first place?! He doesn't want to lose the community by showing us the way that he really thinks about women; the way that he is so comfortable with raping women that he doesn't even see it as "rape." And only after he rapes again will the active members of his community realise that to sympathise with a rapist is to give space for rape to continue.

And here comes the voice of the stereotypical male: So then what do you want us to do? Do you have some kind of plan that can help fix this?

Yes. What if for every man that raped, his name could be plastered around town, letting everyone know what an awful creepy pain-inflicting dangerous misogynist he really is? What if the survivors in the community were given the opportunity to safely verbally and/or physically take their anger out on the ones actually doing the oppressing instead of participating in passive, downplayed, dis-empowering and re-tramatising failed attempts at accountability processes? And what if every man that considered raping was too afraid of the social consequences to ever follow through with it? What if every man who raped previously was too afraid to commit the crime again? What if our communities didn't decide to exonerate rapists, and instead worked to make this a safe and supportive space for empowering rape survivors? What if rape were as rare an occurrence as you like to pretend it is?

What if you supported us by actually asking us how we'd like to be supported, and strongly committed to that? What if survivors of rape received as much support and energy and effort within this community as those who perpetrate rape???

*I have to ask this community: **Is it really worth putting another woman at risk???***

Things The Community Can Do When Made Aware Of Rape:

1. Check in with the survivor to find out what she needs.

*The survivor's needs should be the most important focus, as this is the person who was most directly and intensely hurt by the rape.

2. Don't question or doubt the survivor's story or her methods for trying to cope with being raped.

*Admitting being raped is NOT an easy thing to do in a rape-culture. Make sure the survivor feels heard and believed. Rape is too common and rape victims are too often not believed or supported. There is NO wrong way to cope with being raped. Accept that the survivor may seem "intense" or "inconsolable" for a period of time, and that her emotional and physical needs may be complex and changing. This is a normal/natural response to being raped.

3. Make sure the rape victim knows she is not alone.

*Rape victims are not responsible for the terrible things done to them. They need support and reassurance in the aftermath of such a horrible experience.

4. Address the issue with the rapist (if the rape victim allows).

*Be sensitive to the rape victim's needs around how the subject is talked about and with whom. Respect needs for the victim's privacy and safety.

5. Get the rapist's perspective, but call him out on his bullshit if his story doesn't match up.

*Rapists are often skilled in how to minimise their actions and talk their way out of being known for raping someone. It is in their best interest for self-preservation to deny or downplay their actions and refute their victim's experience. Be aware of this and call him on it directly. Let him know it's not OK.

6. Ask others who are affected by the news what can be done to make them feel safer.

Things Perpetrators Can Do When Called-Out For Rape:

1. Admit that you're a rapist / that you have raped someone.

*Even if a person can be identified with other characteristics (responsible partner, hard worker, community organiser), if rape is something that has been committed in their past, then this person is a rapist.

2. Provide full-disclosure.

*ESPECIALLY in spaces with people that might feel unsafe with a rapist around (women, victims of rape, LGBTQI).

*This may seem counter-intuitive, but it ultimately benefits those most vulnerable.

*It is the rapist's responsibility to show the community that he has changed, and to create an environment where everyone can feel safe from rape. THIS IS NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE RAPE VICTIM.

3. Make sincere apologies.

*Contact past victims (unless they are severely traumatised or have made it clear that they absolutely don't want to be contacted), the community, people who have been affected by the rape, etc.

4. Accept that there are situations where you will not be welcome.

*This is one consequence of rape. If you rape, you create an unsafe space around you.

*It is your responsibility that you are not threatening to the community that you are around. If ANYONE finds you threatening due to your past raping, then you must accept the lifelong consequences of your past actions and LEAVE. (Consider the much harsher lifelong consequences of rape victims.)

5. Identify other factors that moderate inappropriate behaviour like rape and objectifying women.

*Such as alcohol, drugs, porn, environment, people, etc.

Dear Sydney Community (Part 2),

My body has been used as a weapon against me. Every night for the past 2 and a half years, my mind is still his weapon. Recurring nightmares about my rape haunt me. I'm surrounded by a rape-culture in which this is hardly taken seriously. As a reaction to the rape I've lost weight, been unable to sleep, unable to work, developed severe social anxiety, lost friends and relationships, become depressed and hopeless, developed a negative self-image, been terrified of men, struggled with constant fear and chronic PTSD, and been in and out of the hospital for problems with my cervix. The man who raped me has suffered no consequences for his acts, and yet he continues to terrorise me with what he's done to this day. The detective who I reported to wouldn't treat this as seriously as they should because I waited over 2 years to report the crime. It didn't seem to matter to them that it's taken me 2 years of intensive therapy just to feel safe enough to speak about it. The man who raped me threatened to lie about the rape and drag me through court if I reported it, and his supporters in the community said that they'd still support him if he lied about it, because they don't believe in cops or jail and he somehow deserves their support. Then he blocked me from contacting his other partners to warn them about him. According to the law, he should be serving an average term of 7 years in prison with a fine of around \$50,000 for what he did to me, but he has been served with no actual consequences, no freedoms taken away, no practical or material punishment for what he's done. One therapist told me that I should try to let go, that I should begin to move on, that I should come to peace with what happened within my mind and body. The problem is that nothing about my rape was peaceful. I fought back emotionally against what was happening, I'd said "no" a thousand times before, I'd set my boundaries, I struggled to protect myself, but this time my arms were tied, my body was pinned down with him on top of me, my anus was ripped open forcibly by a man that I trusted, in a house that was supposed to be safe, in a city that was unfamiliar to me, in a community and a culture that provided no one for me to go to. My first sexual experiences were of abuse by older men as a tiny child. Later I was finger-raped by a stranger on my sister's lounge room floor while I was under-the-influence and too scared and inebriated to do anything about it. The guy and his friend talked violently about how they deserved to rape me because of how I dressed and because my sister was a whore. They said I "had it comin." A while after that I was raped in my sleep by someone in the anarchist community who I let sleep in my bed. He was in a monogamous relationship with a feminist partner and everyone seemed to like him, so I figured he was OK. We all got drunk at a show one night and he asked if he could sleep in my bed and I said yes, never thinking he would assault me. But I woke up to him

on top of me, my clothes no longer on, thrusting in and out of me. I didn't know what was happening. When he finished he started crying and telling me that "we" had cheated on his girlfriend and what were we going to do about it. He cried about being afraid that she'd leave him. I didn't know what the fuck had just happened. It took me hours to realise that I'd just been raped by someone I liked and trusted. Later his feminist partner told me that he had a history of rape; that he'd raped women in the community before me, all while they were passed-out drunk; that she was afraid he'd do the same to me when she met me because I was "his type." What the fuck?? How come no one thought it was important enough to tell me about the rape-history of a repeat offender before I allowed him to sleep in my bed next to me while I was drunk? How come a guy in the anarchist community is allowed to go on revolving in our circles as someone with a violent history like that? But that was nothing compared to what Ben did to me. It was nothing compared to being tied up, held down, and forcibly anally raped by someone I'd let close enough to be in a relationship with. That broke me. That was the worst thing that's happened to me since I was a powerless little kid. And I've been on my own with all of it. The law hasn't helped me, my family can't help me, and all I have left is my idea of "community." But for the most part, our communities aren't supportive of victims and survivors of sexual assault. A man in this community has raped. A man in this community has raped, and yet he still hangs out and travels and socialises in these communities. I'm afraid to leave my house because I've been so severely affected by his rape, and yet he can be anywhere he wants. I'm scared. I'm scared that no one is taking this seriously. I'm scared that everyone is just waiting for me to be quiet so they can go back to how things used to be, before they knew there was a rapist in the community. I'm scared that he'll just be welcomed back in because he's a smooth-talker and a charming nice-guy, and because people want to believe in his ability to change so badly that they're not even willing to do the work to make sure that change happens. I'm scared that he'll just keep on raping; that he'll never even understand that what he does is wrong. I'm scared that all of you are ignoring me. Please, don't anyone tell me to calm down. Don't tell me I'm overreacting. Don't tell me that I'm going about this the wrong way. Don't tell me that you believe me rapist when he says that what he did wasn't "real" rape, that it was a mistake, an accident, that he's never raped, that he's incapable of rape. Don't treat me like my rape was nothing. This is too fucking real for me.

Gaslighting is a term often used by mental health professionals to describe manipulative behaviour used to confuse people into thinking their reactions are so far off base that they're crazy. Terms like "your overreacting" or "you're so sensitive" are phrases that women have been conditioned by society to accept. They effectively render some women emotionally mute, and steal their most powerful tool: their voice.

I'm sick of my presentation style being used to invalidate my emotions. When I call men out in tears because of something they said or did to me, the people around me will often use my reaction to attempt to demonstrate that what I say cannot be trusted — in other words, that I must be insane if I'm letting those around me see that I'm upset. And for someone to be that upset over anything so seemingly small to the male audience must mean that I'm not thinking within reason. I'm sick of people not taking my emotions seriously.

Now it's not that I think Ben's community is consciously discounting my reaction to being raped by him; I assume they just see me as projecting my rape unrealistically based on the assumption that the rape Ben committed was not intentional and therefore was an unfortunate accident by an otherwise respectable and remorseful member of their community. I've heard folks say they're supporting Ben because they don't think what he did was "real" rape, like it was some accidental crossing of my boundaries or some mistaken failure to check in during sex. And so when I cry and scream about being held down and forcibly raped by him, I come off as somehow a little too upset to be taken seriously. Maybe I'm just a hysterical woman, right? And so my story isn't taken seriously, and Ben's given the chance to explain the rape away as something less than what it really was. It seems that they perceive my anger and fear as aggression, and that no matter what Ben or his supporters say, they don't think they can deduce advice from an emotional person such as me. It's clearly much more palatable to listen to his voice than to an upset victim who is afraid that her emotions are driving all of his community away. Ben's friends in his community don't trust the expertise of someone who was intensely affected by rape. They've taken the lies and advice of the perpetrator in how to deal with this situation.

For all of Ben's friends, here are some hard facts: More than 1 in 6 women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime. More than 1 in 6 women in Newtown have probably already been sexually assaulted or violently raped. 9 of 10 victims of forcible rape will suffer from PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder). Symptoms of PTSD include flashbacks, nightmares, frightening thoughts, strong guilt, strong depression, strong worry, difficulty sleeping, withdrawal from family and friends, appetite disturbances, preoccupation with personal safety, and panic/anxiety attacks.

But seriously, fuck the statistics. I feel like the only way to validate my experience is through statistics, and that's fucked. Hearing from the source of the oppressed is not enough for you, and that's a serious problem. Stop staying "objective" and just for one minute, put yourself in my shoes. Ben McCullagh-Dennis held me down and forcibly anally raped me to the point of serious physical injury. Before that he crossed nearly all of my clearly-negotiated sexual boundaries and consistently failed to use or respect the concept of consent. And before that he admitted to coercing his previous partners into forced sex with him. And now when he tells you that he's never raped anyone, that he simply made a "mistake" and that he's still the respectful and responsible guy you've always known him to be, you believe him. And hey, if you still don't believe that the truth of the story is how I'm telling it, it's time to start asking yourselves if you *really* know him as well as you think you do.

He lied. Ben McCullagh-Dennis lied about having never raped anyone, he lies about his relationships with his victims, and he lies about not remembering the details or circumstances surrounding any of the times that he has raped. I don't see how his friends can still look him in the eye. I don't see how Ben is still allowed to comfortably live in Sydney after people have found out about him. I don't see how you can put down this intensely personal zine and go on with your social dance as if this guy never stripped women of their dignity. I don't see how folks can *still* be refusing to listen to or support me or my process of moving forward from being raped by a member of your community. If this isn't your problem too, then this isn't a community.

"Abusers are almost always charismatic, charming and well-liked. They're not 'all bad' at all – they usually have contributed something significant to the activist community that makes it even harder for other activists to hold them accountable. It is easy to forgive mostly behind-the-scenes interpersonal abuse in someone who is so exciting and effective in other ways."

from "Thinking Through Perpetrator Accountability"
in Rolling Thunder

<http://www.anarchapistemology.net/archives/18>

To Sydney from Survivor-Support,

Can everyone please, just for once, stop focusing on the good qualities and characteristics of this person and actually start focusing on the fact that he raped? Can we stop focusing on how badly this is affecting him, how difficult this has all been for him, how stressed out he is, and start focusing on the fact that he is to blame for raping someone? Can we start focusing on the reality that none of this would be happening if he hadn't raped?

Can we stop considering his feelings above all others? Can we recognise that being called out for rape is hard because rape is wrong? Can we accept that Ben has been lying to everyone about who he is, and that now he's having to face the reality and the consequences of his actions? Can we start to deal with the fact that a member of this community is a rapist, and that we don't actually know how to deal with that? Can we stop doubting, questioning, and pushing away the survivor when she tries to talk about the things that we don't want to hear? Can we stop believing Ben when he lies and tells us that he simply made a mistake or that he didn't mean to rape or that he hasn't raped?

I feel as if Ben's community and his supporters seem to be missing a crucial element here: that this entire problem is because of Ben's actions of rape and NOT because of the survivor's actions of speaking up about it.

If anyone is upset about how difficult this has been for the community, please try to remember that this is difficult because Ben chose to rape someone, not because that person chose to speak up about it. This entire process and all its hardships and stresses and hurt is directly because Ben made the decision to rape. Rape is NOT a mistake. In a violent patriarchal culture where men are taught to use coercion and force to terrorise and dominate wom*n, rape is never a mistake. It is a tool of domination that is used actively, consciously and willingly to enforce power over another person. It is one of the most common and certainly the most horrible form of gendered violence, intimate abuse and domination. Let's be clear here. Let's stop treating Ben as if he accidentally raped his partner. Her experience of the rape along with the behaviours leading up to it, and the experiences of others who have also been violated by Ben, are not accidents. They are not mistakes by someone who simply doesn't know any better. How can we give him that little credit? He's not stupid; He's manipulative. He didn't make a mistake or accidentally cross his partner's boundaries when he chose to rape her. He made a clear and conscious choice to rape, like he's done before and like he's capable of doing again. Let's stop pretending that this is anything other than what it is.

Reformed Abusers Check-List: found at <http://desliz.tumblr.com/post/14521826669>

1. Many modern feminists are terrified of being classed as man-hating, prudish dykes, so there is a tendency to fawn over "reformed" men and "male feminists". It is not surprising that many of the men who insert themselves into these spaces tend to be excellent manipulators and thus very adept at finding ways to silence and talk over women, all the while maintaining an appearance of being concerned for women in general, and women who defend and agree with them in particular.
2. "Sex-positive" spaces are particularly vulnerable, because a lot of sex-positive rhetoric glosses over misogyny and provides a platform for men to discuss how they are oppressed for their kinks. These men foster an environment where it is permissible to silence legitimate critique of internalised misogyny, or of attempts to discuss the often hazy interaction of consent and abuse. It is often interpreted as a space where no negativity or questioning, not even protective, valid questioning, is allowed, and thus it is often dominated by mansplainers.
3. There is no such thing as a person without misogynistic thoughts. The patriarchy could not function otherwise. Beware any man who claims to be free of misogyny, especially if he is talking over women to do it. Such men will also be completely oblivious to more subtle, inter-sectional oppressions. If they're not, they will often "take sides" and play one group of women off another.
4. The vast majority of "reformed" abusive men do not stop abusive behaviour. They simply find new ways to channel it. Often, those new channels are far more subtle, and padded with anecdotes about what a bad person they *used* to be, so that their current behaviour looks saintly in comparison. Red flags include: a) the fact that the women they abused are now mere anecdotes relayed without any apparent concern about how the victims might feel about it, b) a tendency to target young women, often college-aged, for relationships, sex and flirtation, because they do not have sufficient life experience or self-confidence to read them properly, c) targeting other vulnerable populations of women (undocumented immigrants, the disabled, the mentally ill) for the same, because they would be afraid to seek help or would not be believed if they did, d) self-flagellation that is accompanied by a contradictory failure to understand why others are still angry or fearful of them. They also often seek the company of prominent women and behave well around them, so that these same women can be relied on to defend them if necessary.
5. A man who is genuinely interested in minimising sexist, abusive behaviour will accept and understand that he will fuck up sometimes. He will understand that he is not permitted in some spaces, and, when called out, he will learn from the experience and not repeat the error. When challenged about his sexism, he will not respond with anger or aggression, and he will not recount past aggressive behaviour solely to illustrate what he is capable of. He will remove himself from situations where his emotions are threatening to make him fuck up. He will not declare himself a "feminist" or bestow himself any other title that puts women who disagree with him in the position of looking anti-woman. An abusive male will likely do most, if not all, all of those things. If he "behaves", he will be sure to mentally file those incidents away to use later as proof of his victimhood.

This is hardly a complete list, but the bottom line is this: if a known abuser ever makes you feel creeped out, frightened, uneasy, or silenced, *trust your gut*, even if he has a hundred people behind him ready to tell you how awesome he is.

The Complex Concepts of "Nice Guys", Anti-Feminism and Excusing Our Rapists...

For some reason a few women in Ben's community who are close to him have found the need to try to continuously build up his image in the aftermath of me speaking up about being raped by him, not only on their end, but they've actually told me that it's *my responsibility* to remind people of the "good things" about him. Now I don't know if this comes off as horribly wrong to you as a reader, but to me it's painfully clear that I don't actually feel the responsibility, the desire or even the capability to voice the "good things" about the man who raped me. To be perfectly honest, at this point in my life I can't actually think of one single "good thing" about him. Yes, he is charming. Yes, he often *says* the right thing at the right time. Yes, he is generally polite and easy to be around. Yes, he *appears* respectful, responsible, reasonable. And yes, I can definitely admit that these characteristics can seem like "good things" when they are taken at face value. And I'll admit that for a long time I was taken by these characteristics and found myself not wanting to "hurt" him by exposing the other side to him. But that's exactly the problem. Ben, to me, is only an *appearance* of these "good things." He is nothing more than a skilled social mask that can craft the persona of a "nice guy" effortlessly. But that mask came off when he raped me, and it's come off repeatedly since then when he's continued to lie to me about who he is, push my boundaries and disrespect me. And yes, I'll admit that for those women who have never seen his monster-face, his back side, his rapist side, then I'm sure that he stands without a doubt in their minds as someone worthy of protecting and defending.

But please consider this: While I can understand your role as supporters of someone whom you perceive to be a good guy, why can you not understand that to me he is a monster? That to me he is a rapist? That to me he is the man that held me down and forced himself inside of me and then did nothing about it? That to me he is the man that lied and continues to lie, not just to me but to everyone about who he is and what he's done? Why can't you understand that to me he is nothing "good"? That to me he is nothing more than pain and hurt and intentional violence? That to me his good characteristics were only a pretense to get what he really wanted? While I can understand that to you he is still someone "good," why can't you understand that to me his "goodness" has been nothing more than a mask to hide what is underneath?

This is the complex concept of the "nice guy," where people immediately rush to defend the reputation of someone they understand to be "good" when they hear something about him that is "bad." Why can't you just hear an experience of rape from someone who you know without rushing in to say 10 good things about him in his defence? Do you honestly feel the need to discount one experience of violent rape with 10 other reasons why he's not "all bad"? Is this because your own identity is so closely

tied to your idea that Ben is a good person that you can't actually hear and believe and accept that he's capable of violent rape and that the person whom he's raped has nothing good to say about him? Which leads me to the next complex concept...

The women who have taken on the role of Ben's direct defence in my rape case have gone so far as to say that I am hurting women by sharing my story of being raped by him. I've been told that because of how I've chosen to speak up I'm putting other women at risk, that I'm silencing other survivors who choose to deal with rape in different ways, and that I'm actually working against feminism by having experiences and reactions that are different to theirs. **This is the complex concept of "anti-feminism."** This is where a man will use feminists to pit them against each other for his own ends. And it works. As much as I hate to make myself even more vulnerable to further attacks of this sort, I have to be honest and admit that this is the tactic that hurts the most. It's the one that cuts the deepest. If I didn't have an entire long-term community of supportive and understanding people whom I trust and believe in, then I would probably bend to this insidious social pressure and return to silence and acquiescence about my rape in a desperate attempt to regain some sort of favour in the eyes of the feminists that have taken on supporting Ben. But thankfully I feel solid enough in who I am and in who I am friends with to not feel the need to curtail my valid response to rape by trying to tailor it to the lines of some version of feminism that I can't actually agree with.

Is Ben so much the victim that he needs a cheer squad to vocally tout his "goodness" in direct opposition of my experiences? Is he so manipulative that he has managed to find sympathetic feminist women within his community to be his main line of defence? For a long time he also had me protecting and defending him. He would lie to me about his relationships with women in order to create an idea of himself within my mind that directly played against my ability to oppose him. He would tell me that his past partners were manipulative women who hurt him, rather than that he'd been sexually coercive and forceful to them, so that I felt the need to protect him against further hurt by comforting and reassuring him instead of recognising his patterns of behaviour and calling him on it. And yet he would also tell me that his romantic interests were feminists, so that I felt the need to live up to them, to be as good as them, as "feminist" as them. But that's bullshit. Those are clear tactics of division amongst women, of aligning himself with a few strong allies that can come to his defence when he needs it, to remind people that he is a "nice guy" with "good traits" when something like his rape-history surfaces, to restore his identity back to the one he's worked on for so long, to secure his place in the community because after all, what rapist could possibly have such strong feminist supporters? Which brings me to the next complex concept at play here...

The counsellor that I've been seeing to help me work through being raped (who deals directly with people who are victims of sexual violence) offered me possibly the single most

emotionally supportive element in my healing when she allowed me the opportunity to finally stop making excuses for my rapist. **This is the complex concept of excusing our rapists.** Up until then (over 2 years after being raped by Ben) I had been repeating a pattern of making sure to follow any negative realisations about his character with positive ones, dutifully repairing his reputation any time I'd put it in question, not only to myself but also to everyone around us. When I would talk about the rape privately with Ben, bringing up how much it had hurt me or how fucked up his behaviours leading up to it were, I would always be sure to also reassure him by telling him that I didn't think he was all bad and by reminding him of his other better qualities. I don't think this is something that I did naturally, but rather because Ben actively made me feel guilty for "hurting" him when I would talk about the rape. He would immediately state all his insecurities and all the difficulties of having to face that I was upset with him and that he'd done something wrong. I found this confusing because I wanted, I *needed*, to talk about how badly being raped had affected me and just how horrible of an experience it was for me. But I always found myself being swayed by the conversation into supporting Ben and back-pedaling to the point where I was actually building him up again, in my mind as well as in his.

Then later when I began to talk about the rape more publicly, especially with people in Ben's community, I also found myself sandwiching the hard realities of him being a rapist in between the softer and more palatable ideas that he is generally a "good guy." I would hear myself reassure folks over and over again that even though I was calling him out for rape, I could still see the "good things" in him. Again I found this confusing to myself because what I needed to do was talk about the rape and to have my experience heard and understood and addressed, but what I found myself doing was simultaneously working to repair Ben's reputation any time there was the threat that I might be putting cracks in it. At the time I was aware the reason I was doing this was because I didn't want for the people in his community to hate me for making his life difficult or to disbelieve my experience simply because it was too difficult to hear. So I tried to candy-coat it by reassuring them of all the things that they like about him, because I didn't think they'd be able to hear how it really feels to be raped by someone that they all adore.

But the backlash I've gotten from his community has been a clear indicator of the exact dynamic that I feared. I look back now and realise that for a long time I was probably one of Ben's biggest supporters in protecting, defending and maintaining his character, all the while being guilted into doing that by feeling bad for hurting him or feeling bad for hurting his reputation amongst people who are ready and willing to staunchly defend it. This dynamic has been one of the hardest for me to recognise and one of the hardest to challenge both within myself and within the community. It's difficult because I think that we do it without even noticing. We do it effortlessly. We're

socialised under patriarchy to believe that we're not quite worthy of total and complete respect and safety, so that when we find out someone we know has raped or when we're raped ourselves, we couple the reality of our experience with the work of maintaining the image that we had of the rapist pre-rape. We effectively do the work of silencing ourselves and each other by not allowing for space to really feel the broad spectrum of natural emotions that come with going through something as horrible as rape. Anger, disgust, rage, contempt, hatred — these are all normal and natural reactions to being violated sexually. Hurt, fear, sadness, loss and grief are also emotions that accompany being raped, but they're not the *only* ones. But under patriarchy we're only given license to validate the emotions that are less confrontational, more acceptable, easier to navigate while still maintaining the current power structure.

Dealing with Ben's community has exemplified this to the extreme. I feel as if the only way that my experience can be stomached for people in that community is if I am a hurt victim who is willing and able to couple my pain of being raped alongside my belief in Ben's goodness and humanity. On the flip side, I feel as if any time I express even the slightest suggestion that I am an enraged survivor who sees only a monster behind a mask when I look at Ben, I'm viewed and judged as someone who is failing to remain objective and therefore must be challenged, questioned, attacked and ultimately silenced. Well, I *am* angry. I *am* disgusted. I *am* enraged. I feel contempt and hatred for the man who raped me, and I feel fully valid in that. I feel confident that my reaction to being raped is a natural human response to a horrific crime that no one should ever have to experience. I feel firm in my belief that rapists cross a line which I will never be able in my heart or soul to forgive or forget.

...so for those of you who are still committed to defending and protecting Ben and his reputation against the reality of rape, please do it without including me. I will no longer do the work of maintaining his image for him. I will no longer make excuses for someone who raped me. End of story.



Top 10 Things I Hear Rape-Apologists Say: by Lucy Loveless

(Hint: The next time you hear that a friend of yours has raped someone or that a survivor has gone public with her story, if you feel like responding to the news, do yourself a favour. Stop, think about this Top 10 List, check if your response is on here, and if so, well, just don't say it. Believe me, it's already been said 10,000 times before. And believe me, it's just as fucked up every single time. So please, do us all a favour under rape-culture, and keep your mouth shut. Better yet, educate yourself on what rape-culture is, how it works, how it questions survivors while defending perpetrators, how it minimises rape until it's not even a big deal, how it reinforces a violently gendered patriarchal culture, and how it pretty much just sucks for everyone. So keep that in mind if you're thinking about saying any of the following...)

1. I just don't believe he could do something like that.
2. Everyone makes mistakes.
3. It was a long time ago. He's changed.
4. When do we get to hear his side of the story?
5. He says what happened wasn't "really" rape.
6. Is this really the right way to go about dealing with being raped?
7. I don't believe in jails or police, so I won't support the survivor if she chooses to use them.
8. But when does the perpetrator get to move on with his life?
9. The perpetrator deserves support too.
10. I know the survivor is upset, but let me ask these questions ...

And Bonus Line! "I think he's still a good guy who doesn't really want to hurt anyone."

(Or if you're someone who too often finds yourself caught off-guard when a rape-apologist speaks up, you can use any of these short responses below as quick one-liners to the fucked up all-too-common sentiments above...)

1. Nice guys rape too.
2. Sure, everyone makes mistakes. But NOT everyone rapes.
3. Rapists "can" change, but do they really?
4. When will you actually start believing the survivor?
5. There is no such thing as "soft rape." Rape is rape. Period.
6. And just what is the "right" way to go about dealing with rape?
7. Survivors should be supported NO MATTER WHAT!
8. Do you mean "move on with his life" or do you mean pretend he's not a rapist?
9. Do you mean he deserves "support" or do you mean he deserves defence?
10. No. Stop right there. The survivor has been raped. Hold your questions and just try listening.

And Bonus Response! **Are we both still talking about RAPE???**

CONSENT IS...

voluntary

sober

enthusiastic

verbal

non-coerced

continual

active

honest

LACK OF CONSENT = RAPE

A Word from Gnell:

"An explanation is not a justification. Rape is a culture; rape is pathology; rape is an institution."

Rape is NOT a mistake! We live in a rape culture in which rape is an intentional, violent tool used to terrorise and control wimmin, children and gender non-conforming people in order to maintain patriarchy. Patriarchy which awards rapists, provides them no consequences and allows for rape to continue unchallenged and unchecked.

It is NOT a mistake that men are socialised into rape-culture and taught to dominate and to control and to rape. It is NOT a mistake that men do not question this socialisation of their actions for themselves, because they benefit off of the hierarchy created by rape. And the rape Ben has perpetrated is no different.

I am so glad that Ben has been named openly. He and so many other rapists and manipulative and controlling men within the radical community need to be named and outed. It is enraging that survivors have to do so much work to get support, acknowledgement and recognition of their experiences, feelings and pain in order for the rapist's friends and community to take them seriously; to take RAPE seriously.

I support survivors. And fuck you to rapists and to those that apologise for them.

"Rape is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear."

Back Story:

I was friends with Ben. We met at Resurgence, a rad queer conference about sexuality and safety in our communities. I went to Sydney for the conference with someone from Melbourne and we ended up staying at the house that Ben lived at. It seemed like a great house, full of folks who took sexuality and safety in our communities seriously. They were wom*n and queer and genderqueer. They were respectful and easy to be around. They were welcoming, and I was excited to meet folks who shared similar interests as me, coming from a background in these things and looking to make friends here. Ben stood out to me because he's in the body-modification scene, same as me. But he came off as refreshingly different to most blokes I've known in that crowd. He didn't seem like an asshole, pretentious, full of himself, disrespectful, misogynist and downright dangerous like the vast majority of professional piercers, tattoo artists and body-mod performers I've met. I introduced myself because I was immediately drawn to this seemingly rad juxtaposition of characteristics — a body-mods artist in the rad/anarchist scene at a queer conference. We started talking and he reassured me with his statements. He told me how important it was for him to provide a safe and supportive environment for people who wanted to be pierced, not like a lot of the dodgy or threatening spaces in that arena. He talked about professionalism, but more than that he talked about bringing a radical bent to the experience. I was impressed. When I met him he came off as friendly, respectful, a little shy and able to listen. I was happy to make a new friend, even though I almost always have some trouble getting close to people.

As I got to know him I began to question some things, but not enough to avoid getting close. The very next time I saw him was a month later when I went back up to Sydney to be suspended by him. I'd talked with him over the phone and set up the date for a piercing-suspension. I had wanted to do one for ages but never felt comfortable enough with my options in piercers to go through with it. I was scared of having some sleazy guy put me in a position of total surrender, where I might not be able to fight him off if he came onto me, or at least be able to fully enjoy the experience of hanging my body from hooks. The experience meant a lot to me, and so did finding the right person to do it. Ben talked me through it pretty well before lining it up, reminding me how important it is to him to provide the right environment. I was sold, so I went up and had it done by him and a co-worker of his. The experience was great. I felt safe and supported, just like he said. I felt respected and good about my decision to do the suspension and to do it with this rad guy I'd just met. But later at his house, while I was still reeling from the emotional fall-out of it all, he offered to do aftercare for my wounds and ended up initiating sex with me. I had sex with him willingly, but I was obviously in an impressionable state and I consider it to be anything but professional to initiate sex with someone immediately after an experience like that. I remember telling him at the time that I wasn't sure if I wanted to have sex with him, but that didn't seem to stop him and so I went along with it. After all, I'd just hung myself up by

hooks through my back for the first time in my life... why not also have sex with someone I'd only just barely met (something I don't do because I'm usually terrified of men and take ages to let them close enough to sleep with).

The next day I checked in with his housemate, who I'd met when I came up before. I was scared at the ambiguity of this new sexual encounter and was aware that I didn't know the first thing about him or about his community. I wanted to be responsible, wanted to be safe, not just me but for everyone else too. Before we'd had sex I'd asked Ben if there was anyone who might be hurt by what we were about to do (a routine habit of mine that I've learned to practice in the hopes of avoiding hurting others in my sexual endeavours). He said he had a partner but the relationship was open and she wouldn't mind. I checked in with his housemate to back up his story. She said it was true, he was in an open relationship. But she said his partner was on the "open" end of it, while Ben would never take advantage of the situation. I asked if there was anyone who would be hurt by me hooking up with him, if there was anyone I should check in with, anyone I should talk to, or if there was any history of Ben's that I should know. I told her I was intimidated by not knowing the community or Ben's history or the various social dynamics of the people there. I didn't want to be fucked up to anyone, nor did I want to put myself in an unsafe position. She assured me that Ben was great, that he was totally respectful, that he'd been hurt by women before and was shy and timid with them now, that she couldn't understand why more ladies didn't hook up with him. She told me that he was "the catch of the county." I felt confident that I'd made fine decisions, that I'd done everything I could possibly do to be responsible and respectful in this new relationship, to myself and to Ben and to his community.

I started going up to see him in Sydney. Our relationship was more sexual than I was used to, but I decided to go with it. I was excited and Ben seemed a safe partner to try this out with. He talked a lot about wanting to get into radical politics. He talked about wanting to move away from the piercing scene and start working more on things that meant something important. He was obviously new to it all. He didn't know most of the things that I talked about, most of the things that I cared about in terms of radical politics. But he seemed willing and eager. In the past few years I know he's become much more involved. He hasn't been in the anarchist-identified community for long, but in his few short years he's inserted himself into many cool projects and spaces. It makes sense because the anarchist community always lacks so much energy and is always happy to get someone fresh on board to help out with taking on work, not usually bothering to find out where they're coming from or dig too deep into who they are behind their social mask. In my experience of the activist community in mega-privileged white-washed countries like Australia, charismatic men are welcomed in and given heaps of credit for doing the most visible work, even though their energy is tied directly to their privilege and their motivation is often self-serving and ego-based. Too

often these kinds of dynamics create environments where guys who are seen as active in the community become somehow above being held to the same standards of basic human decency as the rest of us. They're put on a pedestal for doing so much work in the public sphere while they're allowed to continue being jerks and misogynists and rapists in their private lives. This is the unique and insidious "anarchist" character that our flimsy veil of radicalism effectively provides shelter for.

Throughout our relationship Ben admitted to coercing his previous partners into having sex with him in ways they'd said "no" to, although he described it as something less manipulative. He also admitted to having a year of "disrespectful" sexual encounters with women, although he wouldn't go into detail on what exactly that meant. And he always took the time to explain to me over and over again what a good guy he was, how respectful and safe he'd set out to be. He reminded me that he was a professional piercer so that he could provide an alternative to the threatening and lecherous environments of most piercing studios. He went so far as to tell me that one of his bosses had raped someone he knew and that he used his position as a piercer to have sex with under-age girls, and so it was all the more important to Ben that he stay at that high-profile studio and offer a "good experience" to the clients instead. (It never seemed even an idea to him that maybe he should turn this guy in or try to shut down such a horrible place that was such a direct threat to so many women and girls or at least warn people about it.) Instead he just kept devoting massive amounts of his time and energy to a place that directly stood against everything that I understand to be in line with my ideas of safety and respect for women. I think because of this he made even more of an effort to appear like a radical, like a feminist ally, like an anti-sexist guy who gave a shit. The split was too much for me, and before I broke up with him I started to put the pressure on him to prove his ideals with actions instead of empty words. I told him to get in touch with some feminist-allies who were starting up a men's group to challenge sexism. I made that a direct request in response to him raping me, as well as making a direct request that he start his own men's group to talk about his actions as a rapist and the broader subject of living as a man in a rape-culture. Of course he agreed to this and continued to assure me of his grand intentions. He started going to feminist reading groups and put up a bio on his work site to say that he was exploring anti-sexism. (Big statements from someone who is a rapist and who works alongside another known rapist.)

I finally broke up with him 4 months after he raped me, because although he used all the appropriate rhetoric of being a "responsible and respectful pro-feminist ally," his words were totally empty. They actually were a complete mockery of everything I believed in, as a woman and as a feminist and certainly as a survivor of sexual abuse and rape. His two-faced demeanour, the one he showed to me in the bedroom when he would coerce me into having sex with him after I'd said "no" or when he finally forcibly took it, was sickening. I couldn't believe I'd ever been duped by him, and I was disgusted and scared (but unfortunately not surprised) that the anarchist community would harbour someone like him. I was angry that

no one told me about who he really was before I'd consented to sleeping with him, and I was totally disillusioned at any previous notion I'd held that I could keep myself "safe" or that we can build and foster "safer spaces." Ben was in the thick of it, he was an anarchist organiser who lived and volunteered in the hub of the anarchist community ... and he was my rapist. The whole thing was so typical it scared the shit out of me. The rape and the full impact of the reality of the situation forced me to retreat into social anonymity. I left the community that I'd spent so long working in, so long fighting for the safety and respect of wom*n, so long addressing sexual assault and hoping, dreaming, believing that we could actually create something that was different than the mainstream rape-culture all around us. I retreated to solitude and hopelessness.

When I confronted Ben 2 years later about the rape, he said he barely remembered it. He said it was too long ago for any of the details to be clear. He told me about all the other things he had going on in his life, how busy he was and the various things that he was struggling with. I kept bringing the subject back to the topic of him raping me, making it clear that I couldn't let it go any longer, that I needed to deal with it finally. I told him that I was going to speak up about what he did to me, that it was important to me that others know, not because I thought he was a "bad guy," but because the truth deserved to be known. He said that I could talk about what happened, but that I shouldn't use his name because he was scared of being known for rape. He dragged me through all of his insecurities, using old emotional leverage from our relationship to make me feel bad, to make me feel like I was going to hurt him if I spoke up about being raped by him. He went back and forth in his own story, telling me that he remembered what he did and that he was sorry, to telling me that he didn't remember because it was too long ago, to telling me that if I reported to the police he'd lie about what he did to get out of going to jail. I was appalled and disgusted. I felt sick that I ever let this guy close, that I ever believed his community when they told me that he was a great "catch" in a partner. If he's a great catch, then who the fuck is in our communities? If a repeat-rapist is someone to look up to as a good partner and feminist ally, then we're seriously deluding ourselves.

I tried to initiate an accountability process with Ben because I have a stupid amount of hope in ideas of alternative justice and an embarrassing capacity to give people second-chances. When I first addressed the rape with him I made some requests that I thought would help him to learn about how he'd fucked up (raped), where he went wrong with his obvious beliefs in male sexual entitlement over women's bodies, how to become a less dangerous person (rapist), and how to move forward from there. I spent 2 months coming up with ideas that I thought would actually make a difference for him and the people around him. I told him that he needed to disclose his rape-history to all his future partners BEFORE becoming intimate with them so that they could make their own decisions around if they felt safe being close to him. And I told him that he needed

to find someone in the community to talk with about the rape and to mentor him in learning how to be a less shitty person. I told him that he needed to start meeting regularly with someone to talk about his problems with rape and to talk about being a man in a rape-culture. He not only agreed to all this, as a "radical" man would, but he went so far as to tell me just how much this meant to him, how "committed" he was to being held accountable for his actions, how "dedicated" he was to learning how to be a responsible and respectable sexual partner. He told me how much I meant to him, how he couldn't stand to think of losing me because he'd raped me, how that would break his heart, and how no-matter-what he would do these things not to win me back but out of his own true and sincere desire to be a good person. And yes, I was the idiot that stood there and listened to him and actually thought for a second that he meant what he said.

Later I found out that he didn't do anything that he'd claimed he would. He didn't keep any of his agreements. His word meant absolutely nothing. But I tried again to initiate another accountability process, this time with others involved, in the hopes that it could maybe work. He told me so much that he'd changed, he was a different person, he was dating a feminist and he was finally safe. I wanted to believe him, but he lies through his teeth and he sugar-coats everything in that typical way a rapist does when they don't want to be caught out for what they're used to doing. But the process didn't work because Ren's words and his actions were worlds apart, and his supporters stood by him in saying that he was truly sorry and that he was doing everything he could to be responsible for rape, even though he wasn't actually doing anything that was asked of him. I was made to feel bad over and over again for making his life difficult, making things hard on him, asking for too much out of him. I was told by him and his supporters how bad he was doing, how much this was affecting him. I didn't venture to ask any of them to come stay with me and find out first-hand just how "badly" being raped had affected me. But Ren was allowed to keep dodging any sort of responsibility for rape, and he was defended and supported to the point of his friends saying they would withdraw all support from the accountability process and yet continue to support Ren if I reported it, even if he lied about it. They went so far as to say that they didn't think ANYONE in the community would be willing to support me with pursuing an accountability process if I chose to report the rape. How is that possible? In all my years of working against sexual assault in radical/anarchist communities and even in more mainstream spheres, I've never before experienced such a reluctance to support a survivor of rape. My friends, allies and networks were shocked. How could there be no one in the Sydney community that was willing to support a survivor of rape? Why? Why would people in a community that claims to stand against gendered violence and sexual assault be so reluctant to support a survivor of rape? Is it because not ALL of my beliefs are the same as theirs? Is it because I'm an outsider, a foreigner who doesn't have any close personal friends or family that they know? Is it because they don't believe that my rape was "real" rape, that maybe it was somehow an "accidental" rape or a "softer" version of rape? Is it because they've chosen to believe that Ren is incapable of rape, and so my experience must somehow be not worthy of supporting?

Is it simply because it's easier to continue supporting and believing Ben as a friend rather than me as a desperate and traumatised survivor? How is this radical? How is this anarchist? How is this anything other than reinforcing and maintaining a rape-culture by silencing a survivor of rape through withdrawing and denying support? I'm not saying any of this because I think the people involved are terrible people. I don't. I think they actually do care about rape and that they seriously did their best to respond to this situation in the ways that they knew how. And that's the sad and scary part for me. If this is the best that we can do as radical/anarchist communities, then something has seriously got to change. I know so many women who have been raped by members of the anarchist community who remain silent to this day, and it's no wonder if this is what they can expect from a community response. We're not exactly creating environments where survivors can feel safe and supported in speaking up about rape.

The process ended miserably because Ben left the country to travel around the States for the summer with his partner, saying he owed it to her to go on vacation together and that he wanted a break from the heaviness of being reminded of raping me and being confronted with any sort of actual expectations around it (although he'd already had over 2 years of silence where he didn't have to deal at all with it). I alerted the communities he might be staying with to let them know they would be hosting a rapist. Naturally, many of them revoked their invitations, wanting to support me as a survivor and not wanting to put themselves at risk of sharing their safe/r spaces with a rapist who had left his accountability process. Because of the alert, Ben told me that he felt "threatened" for his safety. He said it was unfair to let people know about him, that it hurt his chances of taking this seriously because it created too much hostility for him. His supporters also told me how badly the call-out affected him, and how I was painting a one-sided picture of him. To which I simply have to ask: Are you serious? Do you seriously think it's unfair to alert people to the presence of a rapist? Do you really think it paints an imbalanced picture to state the facts — that someone perpetrated rape and has not been held accountable for his actions? I mean, is it really necessary for me to go into gory detail in order for people to believe me when I say that this guy is NOT a safe person? For fuck's sake, he held me down and raped me! Is there really anything else that I need to say? Just the fact that people are still questioning my tactics, still supporting and defending someone who has raped, is a plain and depressing statement on where we're at as communities that claim to stand against rape. How can we even pretend to be working toward gender equality and against patriarchal power when we shirk away from the hard work of openly and directly addressing rape? How can we claim to be who we say we are — anarchist, feminist, ally, anti-patriarchy, anti-sexism, anti-rape — if we can't even do the work of holding someone to their actions as a rapist?

The third attempt at an accountability process ended after only 2 months because in that entire time Ben continued to break his agreements, blatantly disrespect my

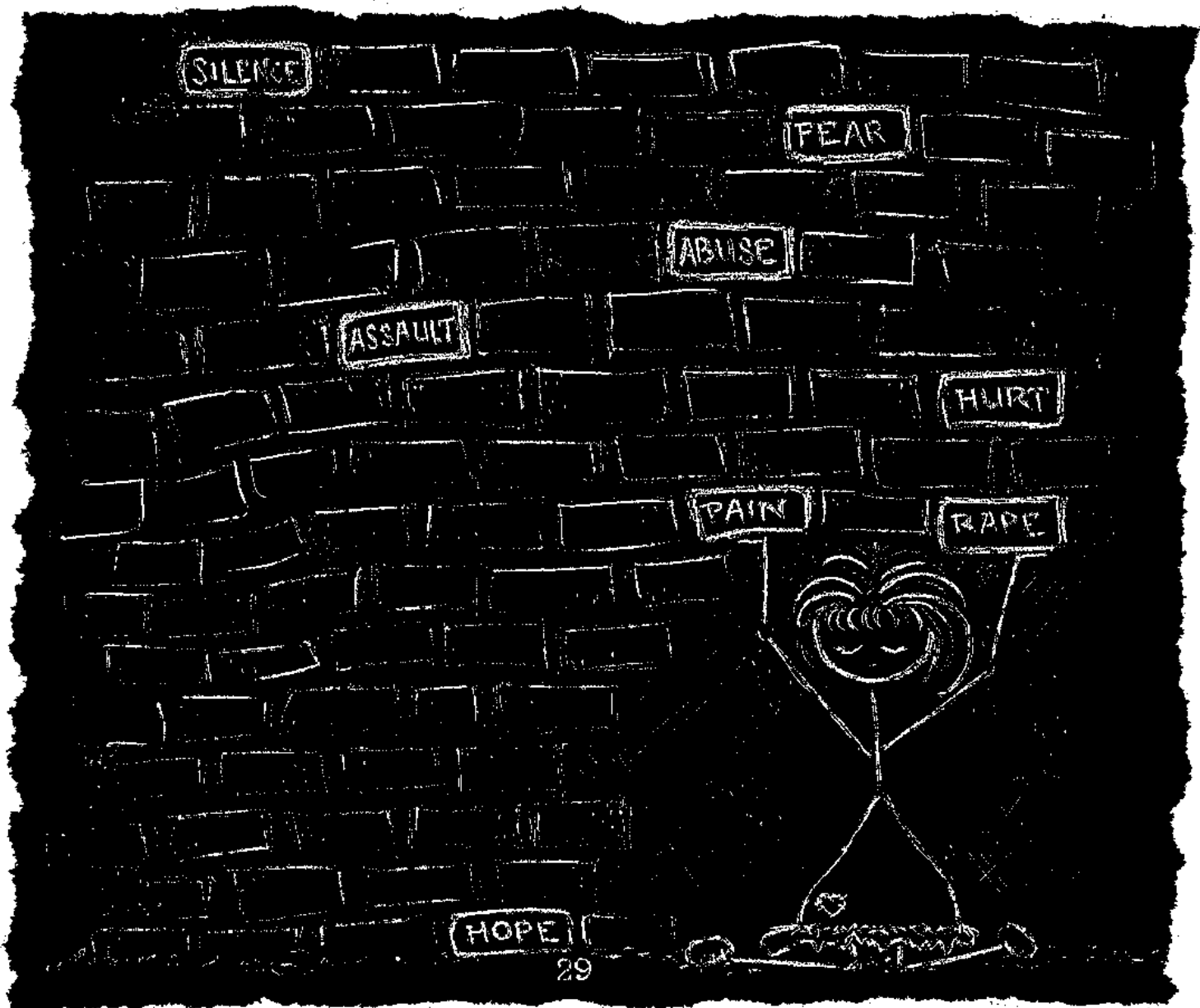
boundaries, lie, and get out of any sort of responsibility for his actions. He overtly lied to not only me but also to everyone else involved. And he left his process to go on vacation (again), at which point the accountability team said they had to end the process because they had no way to actually enforce it or to get Ben to keep his word or engage with it. And all the while folks in his community supported and defended him, under the delusion that he was "willingly" engaged in an accountability process and somehow being responsible for rape. I finally chose to publicly out him because I'd spent 6 months of agony having to re-live the trauma of being raped by him through being forced to tell my story over and over again in detail because the people in Ben's community didn't seem to be able to hear what I was saying, believe it or take it seriously. And because over the past 2 and a half years Ben's done absolutely nothing to show me that he has any regret for what he did or even any understanding that raping me was wrong, beyond the simplistic and skewed understanding that "I'm upset" and that "I'm mad at him for something". All the while he's continued to push my boundaries and disrespect my emotional and physical limits in the processes, in the exact same way he pushed my boundaries and disrespected my emotional and physical limits in our sexual relationship. And still I hear his community saying that I'm being too hard on him!? That I'm making things too difficult for him!? News flash everyone: DEALING WITH RAPE ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE EASY. That's because rape is wrong and shouldn't ever happen. End of story.

And the worst part wasn't even being raped. It's trying to address it in a community that claims to care, but seems to have no capacity for dealing with this or no idea of how to go about it. I've tried everything I possibly could to deal with being raped... responsibly, respectfully, in line with my beliefs as an anarcha-feminist and someone who really, truly cares about community. But I've been overwhelmingly unsupported, doubted, attacked and made to feel guilty for making public Ben's dangerous behaviour. I've been repeatedly questioned for trying to protect other people from him and for trying to move on and heal from being violently raped. And Ben has been overwhelmingly supported by his community, defended and protected because he's somehow gotten the people around him to feel sorry for him as a nice guy who's been called-out rather than as someone capable of raping women. He's used lies, manipulation, deceit, smooth-talking, charm, and guile to make himself out to be the victim in this case... the person who needs and deserves the support of his community, rather than the person he's raped. I guess, after all, there's one thing that I do believe from him: I don't think it's easy to be faced with having done the most horrible thing a person can do to another person — rape. But that's what he did. And he needs to face it.

I was Ben's partner and his friend. Part of me wished for a long time that I could still be friends with him. Part of me is scared that he could rape again at any moment. Part of me feels guilty for not speaking up sooner, trying harder to alert people in his community of his actions before he had the chance to insert himself even deeper into the local scene. Part of me thought I could help him to learn and grow and change into someone safer and more

respectful and responsible. Part of me is angry at everyone around him for allowing him to continue existing in his community without taking on the serious work of addressing his actions as a rapist. Part of me is worried that he'll lash out violently again, probably against someone who's not in his community and who he'll never have to face, like a sex worker or a casual hook-up. Part of me feels that even if everyone tries their hardest to "help" Ben get better, he will still be the same abusive and dangerous person he was when he raped me.

All I know is that I want for me and my friends to feel safe in our communities. That's why I've spent years working on building structures and networks to address sexual assault, to support each other, to create safe/r spaces and policies, to bring rape into the public sphere instead of letting it keep hiding behind closed doors, hurting us constantly. I'm not the only victim of sexual assault that feels upset by this, and we owe it to ourselves to be honest about our emotions surrounding rape and violence committed by people that we know.



A Word from Alex,

In communities, such as the activist/ radical/ anarchist community, that are critical of and don't identify with the state justice system or the prison system, yet have not put in place an adequate community justice system as an alternative, there is the very real risk of becoming fringe safe-havens for perpetrators of anti-social violent inter-personal behaviour (violent abuse & rape etc.) Until there are community accountability/ justice processes in place that have real consequences and address the psychological, physical, emotional and material effects of these behaviours, these communities remain places where perpetrators can hide safely, because they will soon realise that there are no real repercussions for rape.

Those predators who can divide communities with simple strategies of manipulative communication and dishonesty can 'gaslight'/ frustrate and confuse any possible responses so that there are no real consequences for their actions. They secure a position where they are able to do as they please without fear of retribution, from the state or otherwise. Communities that very obviously don't have adequate community-infrastructure to deal with complex anti-social violent behaviour, yet shout down survivors from using any other alternative, give no real avenues of recourse for people wanting to address their experience of rape. Communities like this will continue to lose the faith of disenfranchised members as they realise how hollow the stated ideals are on the ground in the face of real violence, and they will then move away to communities that offer more genuine safety. At which point these communities aren't really worthy of being called communities at all.

There's a lot of work to be done to put in place the skilled inter-generational infrastructure that is capable of dealing with the complexity of interpersonal violence, and that work doesn't start with reactive silencing of a survivor trying to give voice to experiences and seek consequences to being violated, when the community offers none. Until that time, these half-formed fringe, often single-generation communities provide opportune circumstances to harbour predators and for continued predatory behaviour. Good will aside, that's pretty sickening...

"There are men in the punk scene who I know have sexually assaulted women. There's the guy in the band that tearfully told me about how he had drunken sex with a girl in a front yard and she was crying and obviously not into it and he did it anyway. There's the guy who's all over MTV who told me about how he used to get girls wasted drunk and then fuck them. Or the guy who runs the record label who took my friend home when she was drunk and even when she said no to him over and over again, still forced her. She graphically described to me how she was saying no while he was forcing his way inside her body. These are men in bands that you would recognise in a heartbeat. Men that are high profile and respected in the punk scene. Men that write for the fanzines you read. All of these events that were shared with me happened many, many years ago and a couple of the men expressed deep remorse, regret, and guilt over what happened. So is that a reason to keep silent? Will these men be banned from the punk scene and made to suffer as the women they assaulted suffered? As far as I can tell from all the times that this issue has come up within the punk scene, no. No, they will not suffer. No, they will not pay a price. No, they will not lose any of their esteem and worth within the punk scene. No, they will not be ostracised and punished."

Adrienna Droogas, "Brutal" from Slug and Lettuce

<http://www.dorisdorisdoris.com/brutal>

Publicly Outing Rapists:

(This was written in response to the backlash I've gotten for publicly outing Ben for raping me, as part of the "Break The Silence" campaign*. Besides just the general victim-blaming, doubt, disbelief, attacks and misogyny I've heard from people in Ben's community and at large, the most troubling thing to me has been the sincere question from Ben's friends and supporters as to when Ben can reclaim his status post-rape within the community. It's been framed to me that I am painting a one-sided picture of Ben through publicly outing him and that he is not being given a chance to clear himself of this negative reputation. Although I understand those concerns, they're disturbing to me because not only do they jump to the end-goal of restoring Ben's reputation post-rape before even putting in the work of enforcing any sort of accountability for the rape, but because it begs the question within me... Are people asking when Benjamin can clear his reputation of rape, or are they asking when we can go back to pretending that he never raped in the first place? This question for me is real. It is necessary to look at what we're really saying and what we're really aiming for. I've written the following essay to express more fully my reasons behind speaking up and publicly outing Ben for rape. The sentiments expressed also speak for publicly outing ANY rapist for rape.)

*Check out rapeisreal.wordpress.com for more info on the "Break The Silence" campaign.

Why is publicly outing someone who has perpetrated rape so often seen as hurting their reputation or stigmatising them?

My understanding of publicly outing someone as a rapist is so that everyone they come into contact with can know their history and choose their level of engagement with that person based on the reality of what they've done. Don't people deserve to know if someone has perpetrated rape? Raping someone is an action that can never be undone, so why is it so wrong for the truth of that action to be public for the rest of the perpetrator's life? It's not like they didn't do it. It's not like they'll ever get to a point in their life when they didn't rape someone. It seems to me as if people think that once a perpetrator has been "held accountable" through some process for their actions, they should be able to earn a clean slate, their name should be cleared and their history erased as if they had never raped in the first place. But why would we want to actively and purposefully cover up the action of rape? What is the incentive in keeping these things quiet, or in providing a future to look forward to where the rape is no longer talked about or known? Shouldn't it be the right of the community and of everyone who will meet the rapist in the future to be able to make their own fully-informed decisions about that person based on their current behaviour/actions AS WELL AS their past history? Shouldn't it be the perpetrator's responsibility to prove that they've

changed through their current actions and behaviours **ALONGSIDE** the truth of their past, rather than simply trying to cover up their actions? Wouldn't publicly outing them provide an actual incentive for them to change their actions, knowing that everyone will be holding them to what they've done and far less likely to let them get away with repeat behaviours?

Are we choosing to gloss over the fact that rape is not a stand-alone action but is actually a repeat action based on a series of beliefs and behaviours? Rape is never a singular action. It is a series of actions based on a pattern of behaviour that is based on a belief system. Shouldn't it be a matter of public safety for a person who has raped to forever have to hold the public awareness of that action? It's not like they didn't do it. It's not like once they've said sorry or taken some classes or done a few things to make up for it that their history is suddenly wiped clean of what they've done and their beliefs-system is suddenly reformed. Rape is real. It is serious. It is an action that can never be taken back, and an action that leaves a permanent and life-long impact on the person who was raped. Are these things that we're choosing to overlook because we want for things to go back to "normal" once they've left the public sphere? The sad and unfair truth is that things never go back to normal for the person who was raped. They have to live forever with the reality that someone forced themselves on their body for sexual gratification, for power, and for whatever other reasons there are for rape. Rape is an ultimate act of domination, of degradation, of taking something from inside of another person. It is an act like no other, in which a person's own body is used against them. That is why it's so wrong. That's why it's so horrible. Shouldn't it be something that a rapist should have to carry the truth of publicly for the rest of their lives? Shouldn't it be understood that if you rape you will never be able to un-rape, either in your personal history or in your public image? Am I missing something here?

Why do people so often rush to defend the reputation of someone who has perpetrated rape? Why are friends and supporters so quick to criticise the things that survivors do in response to being raped? Why do communities find ourselves trying to come up with answers to the question of when a rapist should no longer have to carry the public acknowledgement of having raped? Is this not just another way of trying to come up with a time for when the rape can again hide in silence? And why would we want for the rape to hide in silence? Rape happens in silence. Why would we want to put it back there? Shouldn't we be doing everything we can to bring rape into the public sphere, where perpetrators can publicly wear the reality of their actions and where survivors can publicly be supported and begin to heal? Shouldn't we be trying to come up with ways to alert everyone to the patterns, histories, behaviours, and actions of people who have perpetrated rape so that we have more choices and options in who we choose to be close with and how? Isn't it everyone's right to know if someone they are close to has perpetrated rape so that they can adjust their engagement with that person to reflect the reality of their past behaviours as well as their current ones? Isn't that an active and realistic way to try to keep ourselves and each other safer?

I know for myself if I'm aware that someone I know has perpetrated rape, and especially if I know HOW they've perpetrated rape and their behaviours and patterns behind it, then I feel far more capable in keeping myself safer by adjusting my engagement with them to reflect that information. For instance, if I know that someone has a pattern of initiating sex without consent while drunk, then I can choose to not be drunk around them. Or if I know that someone has a pattern of coercing partners into having anal sex and then taking it by force, then I can choose to make my boundaries crystal clear and get out of the relationship if I begin to notice that same pattern repeating. My understanding is that if we're made aware of people's rape-history and the patterns of behaviour that lead up to those actions, then we can make choices in our relationships with them to reflect that information and keep ourselves safer. My understanding is that rape doesn't usually happen AFTER someone is made fully aware of a person's patterns of assault, but BEFORE. My understanding, and my personal experience as a survivor, is that rape happens when we have no idea that the person we're with could possibly be capable of hurting us in that way. The actions are even further enforced by us feeling guilty about what happened because we somehow think that we should have been able to make better decisions and avoid the situation. But how could we have possibly made better decisions when the knowledge of that person's actions has been kept from us? Isn't it reasonable to want to know the histories of who we're choosing to sleep with? Shouldn't it be common practice to share this information as widely and openly as possible so that others can protect themselves and so that perpetrators have less chance of repeating their behaviours?

Is that not a sensible and radical way of dealing with rape? Does it not make sense to make this kind of information public so that it can be dealt with in the open, rather than behind closed doors? Rape, assault, abuse, domestic violence, gendered violence – these things all happen behind closed doors and they stay there. They happen where power can be gained and used through tools of pressure, coercion, fear, domination, guilt, manipulation and force. And they are allowed to continue as patterns of behaviour through being allowed to hide in silence. Abusers choose partners who are unaware of their patterns, so they are able to repeat those patterns over and over again. Why would we want to erase someone's history and give them the chance of allowing this pattern to continue? Are we not choosing the reputation of the perpetrator over the safety of anyone who may come into contact with them in the future? Is that the collateral damage that we offer up in exchange for a perpetrator to be able to absolve themselves from the stigma of their actions? It's too much of an exchange for me. It's too high a price to pay. Look at the statistics. Look at the realities. We live in a rape-culture where these actions are commonplace.

I'm sorry if it's seen as antagonistic or confrontational or vindictive or fucked-up for a perpetrator of rape to have to carry the public awareness of their actions for the rest of

their life, but we're not exactly putting in place measures to hold them accountable and make others safe by allowing them to remain silent about their actions. I'm tired of living in a rape-culture. I'm tired of my body and the rights to my sexuality being up for grabs by people who have patterns of sexually assaultive behaviour. I'm tired of not being made aware of these patterns BEFORE I choose to become close to them. I'm tired of friends and lovers and communities rushing in to protect and defend the reputation of people who violently rape. That's not a community or a world I'm willing to be a part of any longer. I need for the silence to be broken. I need for the actions of rapists to be made public domain. I need for my safety and my choices to be respected enough to have full information of who I choose to be close with. I need for survivors to stop being demonised and perpetrators to stop being defended and stories of rape to stop being scrutinised when they finally come out into the open. I know hearing about rape is messy and confusing and hard to navigate for everyone involved, especially for those who are close to the person who perpetrated the rape. But being raped is messy and confusing and hard to navigate, most especially for those who are raped and those who are close to the survivors of rape.

We're not making any progress by hiding these things in the dark or protecting the histories or the identities of people who have raped. Perpetrators of rape need to be held accountable for their actions, openly and honestly. And I believe that includes full and complete and lasting information about what they've done. The action of rape can never be taken back, so why should the public knowledge of it? If we're so concerned about the reputation of someone who has raped, then maybe we should be working harder on directly addressing rape and fighting this rape-culture so that rape can become less of a commonplace reality for all of us. I'm tired of seeing the bulk of energy spent on supporting and defending and protecting perpetrators of rape. I want to see more energy put into supporting the healing process of survivors of rape and into putting measures in place to help make rape a subject that is openly and honestly addressed, in the public rather than behind closed doors. I want to see energy being put into measures to address rape BEFORE it happens, not after.

Breaking the silence by publicly speaking up about rape is a way to warn the public of a perpetrator's actions and to show people the respect of allowing them to make their own decisions about how they will engage with the perpetrator. Breaking the silence around rape is not just a response to rape; it is a pro-active and responsible action that aims to minimise the chance of the perpetrator being able to repeat what they've done. To me, that's breaking the mainstream. To me, that's directly challenging rape-culture. To me, that's radical.

Let's put our energy where it belongs.

TEMPLATE POSTER FOR PUBLICLY OUTING RAPISTS

from the FIGHT RAPE! collective

If you're part of a community that has experienced rape, and are frustrated by your community's or the justice system's ability to enforce any sort of accountability or justice, or if you're just plain tired of rape hiding in silence and rapists getting away with rape, you can use this handy-dandy template to publicly out rapists! It's easy. Just follow these short steps...

1. Check in with the survivor. (This is the most important step!) Make sure they are getting what they need during this difficult time. Offer support that is both emotional and practical. Respect the survivor's needs for safety and for privacy at all times.

2. If the survivor is OK with publicly outing their rapist, use the poster template below (or make your own). Include the name and photo of the rapist and any important info about what they did.

3. Make posters and put them up around town! Network for support in getting the word out.

WARNING: Because we live in a rape-culture where rape is normalised and rapists are defended and protected, the survivor and supporters will almost certainly face doubt, disbelief and downright misogynist attacks for going public with their experience. They may also be at risk for further physical attacks. Be prepared! Make sure to have support and a plan for staying safe and sane. Remember that you are only being attacked because you are speaking out against rape in a culture that is built on gendered power and reinforced through violence and silence.

THIS MAN IS A RAPIST



Benjamin McCullagh-Dennis

is a known rapist. He has a history of predatory sexual behaviour and is a carrier of HPV (human papilloma virus) an STD known to cause cervical cancer in women. He has refused to disclose this information to his sexual partners. This is a public announcement about rape and HPV. If you know anyone who may have been sexual with him please alert them.

Benjamin lives in Sydney and works at PolyMorph Piercing Studio, Enmore St, Newtown.

RAPE IS REAL. BREAK THE SILENCE

Check out rapeisreal.wordpress.com

Ten Rape Prevention Tips:

for perpetrators

- ① Take the time to learn about sexual abuse, gendered violence and rape. Take the time to learn about consent, responsible sexuality and safe sex. This is YOUR responsibility. If you do not take the time to learn about these things and to become a safe and responsible sexual partner, that is YOUR fault.

Rape is NOT a mistake. Not knowing is NOT an excuse.

- ② When you see someone, don't view them as a sexual object.
- ③ If you are in a relationship, don't assume it's your right to have sex.
- ④ When negotiating sex, use open communication and verbal consent to find out if the other person wants to do what you want.
- ⑤ If someone says "no" to any sort of sexual advance, no matter what it is, take that as a final answer and don't push it. Don't use coercion, guilt, manipulation or force to try to change their answer or fulfil your desires.
- ⑥ Remember, your fantasies are NOT your rights.
- ⑦ When someone tells you their sexual boundaries, it is YOUR responsibility to remember and respect them. If you have trouble remembering them, write them down and keep the list with you at all times. If you have trouble respecting them, seek professional help immediately.
- ⑧ If you have a history of rape in your past, provide full-disclosure to everyone you meet that you are a rapist and how you have raped. That will give them the chance to decide how to protect themselves around you.
- ⑨ Use the "buddy system." If you still cannot stop yourself from raping, make sure you have a chaperone at all times. Do not allow yourself to be alone with anyone, as you will be putting them at an obvious risk.
- ⑩ If you have raped, accept that you are not a safe person and that you need serious help. Admit that your actions are based on a behavioural pattern that needs to be addressed. Rape is not a stand-alone action. It is a series of actions based on a series of beliefs. Do not endanger anyone else with your issues.
Seek help immediately and take it seriously.

consent is crucial.

rape is real.

touch me and die,

i came here to

dance!



...then did

it

ever

really

happen?