

To the editors:

### **Men Ending Rape**

It is time to shred the myth that rape will be with us forever, that the best we can do is to teach women to protect themselves with outdoor lighting, locks, whistle, mace, or Rape Aggression Defense classes. This attitude is an abdication of responsibility from those able to respond and an acceptance of rape by those who profess to abhor rape. There is no acceptable level of death, no acceptable level of humiliation, and no acceptable level of degradation in a culture that calls itself civilized. How can a country that holds justice high, a country dedicated to freedom, accept the level of fear that women live with daily? We've got to stop rape, and we can stop it.

For too long we have lived in denial. We can no longer deny the reality that every rape is a violation of *men's* humanity too. We can no longer deny that *our* silence implies *our* consent. We can no longer deny our sisters *their* freedom. What man can look his daughter in the eye and try to explain that "we live in the land of the free, but you must not go out at night?" Which of us can look our kid sister in the eye and say, "I love you," and yet do nothing while she and one in four of her girl friends will be subject to rape or attempted by the age of twenty-five; often raped by their relatives and peers? How long are men going to allow this kind of violence to happen to the women in our lives, before we get off our butts and *do* something?

We are sick to death of hearing men say that because they would never rape, rape is not *their* problem. Well whose problem is it then? Obviously women who survive an assault experience a "problem" – a "problem" that will transform their lives for years to come. But what about the father who is ready to kill because his daughter has been raped? Is he experiencing "a problem?" What about the husband of a woman who has been raped whose marriage dissolves within 2 years in 2 of 3 cases? Is he experiencing a problem? What about the college senior whose partner lives with fear of rape or memories of rape? Is he experiencing "a problem?"

What do men say? "Oh, I'm sympathetic, but I really don't have the time right now." Rest assured that unless you make the time right now, *your* problem of rape will be waiting for you when you finally get around to doing something. Why is it hard for you to identify with the women who are objectified in magazine and newspaper ads, TV shows, song lyrics, and t-shirts. How can an educated man consider himself sensitive if he cannot sense or does not respond to the pain that engulfs others?

### **"But what can I do?" Consider that:**

A 1987 survey of 6, 159 students on 32 college campuses by Sociologist Mary Koss found that:

- One in four women had experienced a rape or attempted by the age of twenty-five.
- Eighty-nine percent of the rapists were know by their targets – men in our own peer groups.
- One in thirteen men admitted forcing women to have sex, but virtually none of these men considered themselves rapists. These men, in other words, considered themselves

normal, and thought that their sexual behavior was excusable, expected, and even acceptable.

Sociologist Diana Russell found that 9.3 percent of female children under 16 years of age have experienced a rape or attempted, with 95 percent of the perpetrators being male (and 38 percent members of the nuclear family). Sociologist Judith Siegel, has found that at about half as many male children are sexually assaulted as females, with 93 percent of all perpetrators being male.

Perhaps you have seen the flyers around campus; “She Fears You,” Men Can Stop Rape,” or a flyer describing a party scene. Do these flyers make you mad? They are intended to. They make us mad! Those flyers and this editorial is directed at men like us who are tired of being perceived as potential rapist. But we refuse to be mad at the women who fear us, because they are simply doing what it takes to remain safe and survive. Our anger is directed at the men who do rape. It is they who have taken our humanity and made it necessary for women to fear us.

We want to change the culture so that rape doesn't happen. We want to no longer be feared when walking across campus at night because rape no longer occurs here. Clearly our male peers need to be educated out of their rape behavior. And who is better to take on this task than other men? Men can stop rape, and we want you to join us. Meaningful social change to end rape depends on action and education – men talking with men about rape and about sexism in general. The Men Against Rape Society (MARS) invites men in this campus community, and any women who would like to work within this context, to join us in working to stop rape. Our first meeting will be Wednesday, February 13, 2002 at 8pm in Smith Hall room 120.

Having outlined the harshest reasons why each of us should consider becoming personally involved in working to create a rape free society, let us end on a warmer note. Working with a group of evolving men, in association with activist women, on such a positive goal is a very valuable, fulfilling experience. Personal stories about our own socialization are one of the most effective means to help both men and women understand and eliminate the roots of rape and rape-like behavior in men. And consideration of our experiences also helps us in our own transformations. It is our hope to have the membership of the group be as diverse as possible so that we may learn from the experience of others, particularly personal experiences of racism and other oppressions that are so closely connected to the oppression of women.