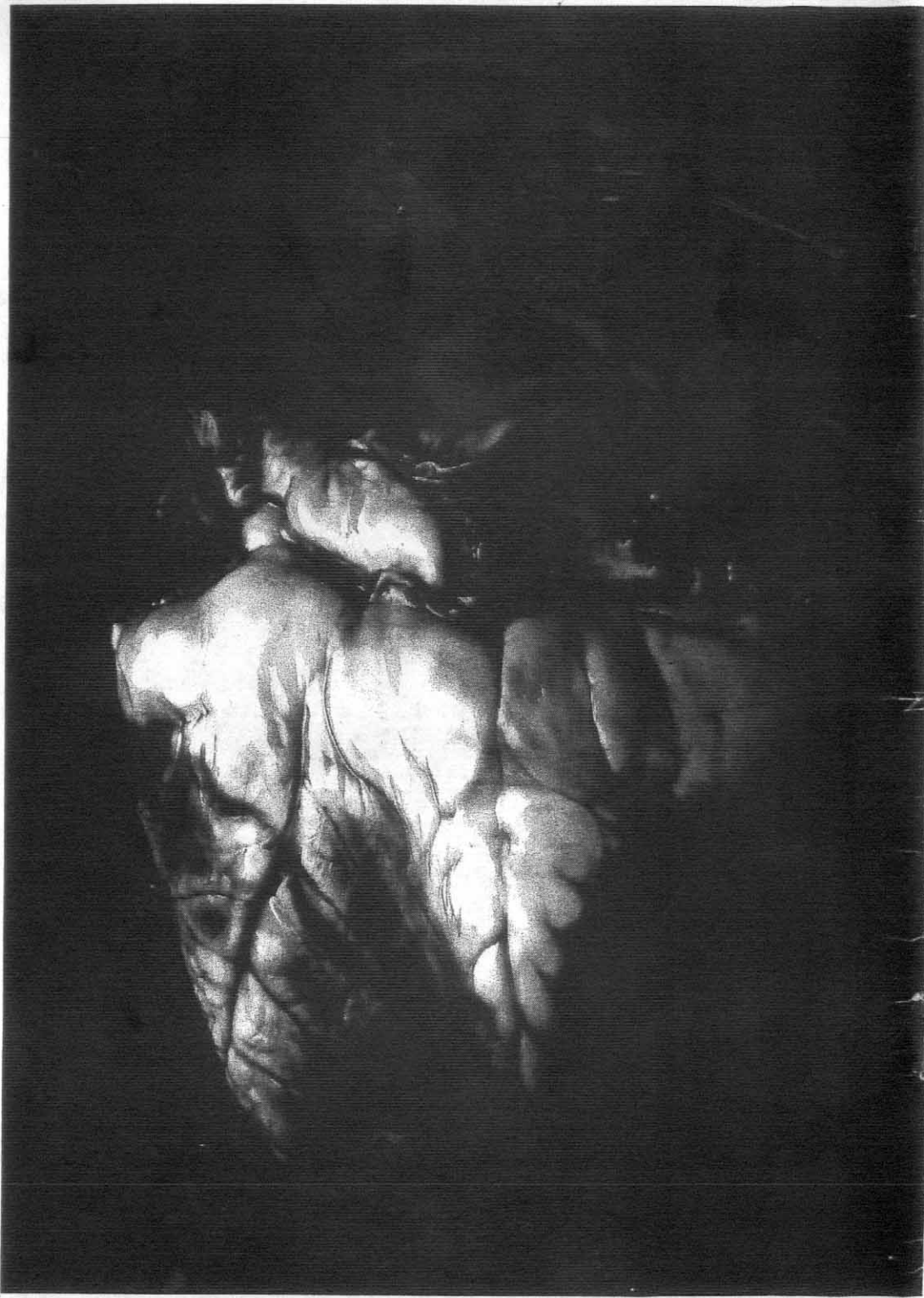
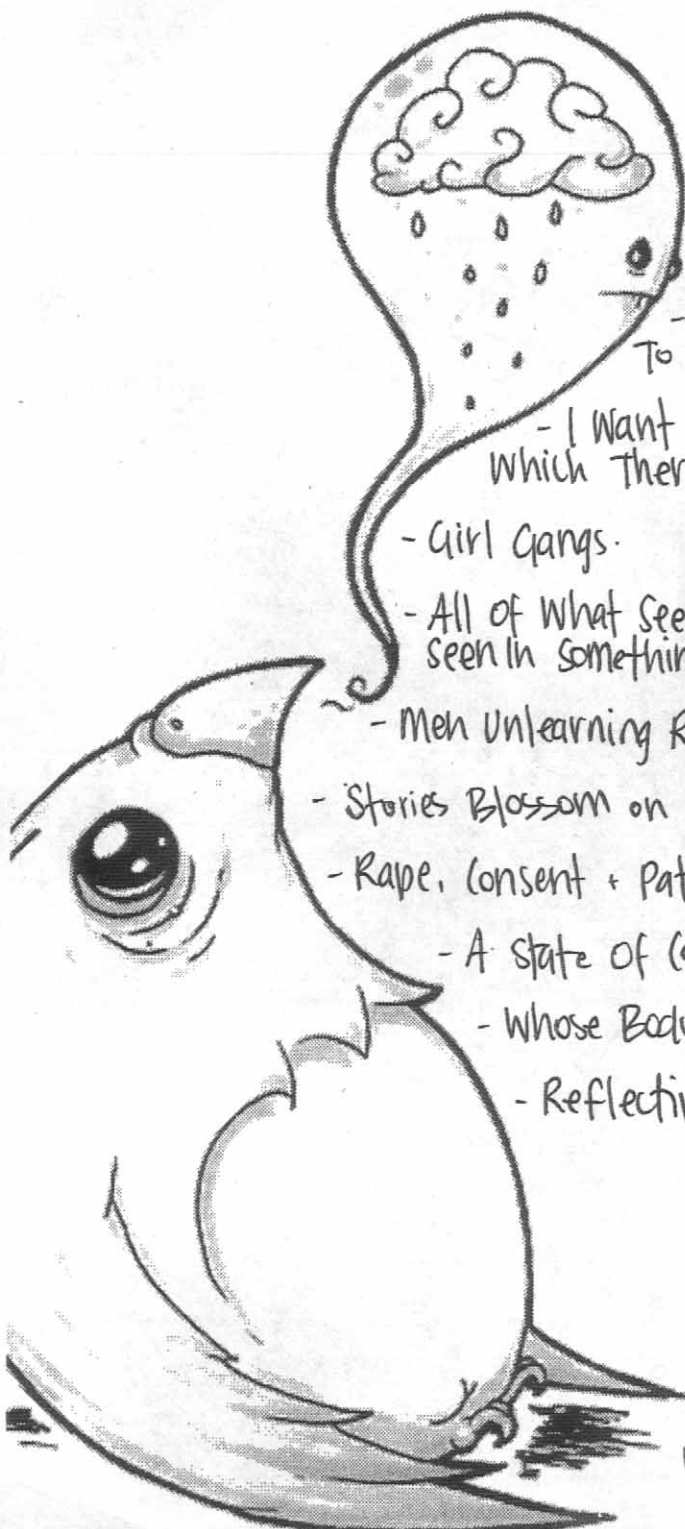


What Do We Do When?

Radical Community Response To Sexual  
Assault. Issue #3.





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- Perdido Street Station (an excerpt).
- These Words Have To Land Somewhere.
- I Want A 24hr Truce During Which There Is No Rape.
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- Stories Blossom on Rainy Days.
- Rape, Consent + Patriarchy.
- A State of Confrontation.
- Whose Body Is It Anyway?
- Reflective Listening.

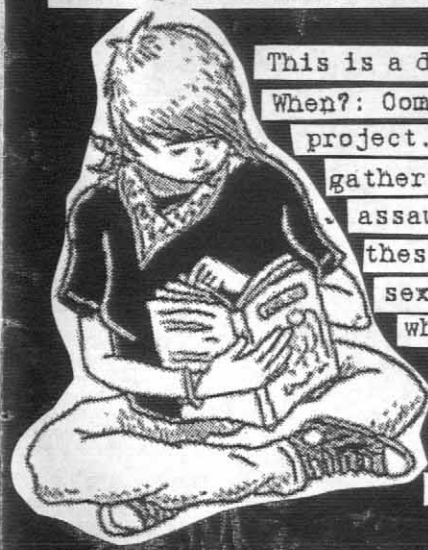
contact:  
propertealistheft@riseup.net

## Thunder collective.

Thunder is for anyone interested in redefining relationships, unlearning rape culture + supporting survivors/anyone affected by sexual assault. This collective will be part of a national network of groups working on radical community responses to sexual assault... Meetings will be held roughly every 3 weeks at Jura Books <http://jura.org.au>

to be on the national network email list, go to: <https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/scar>

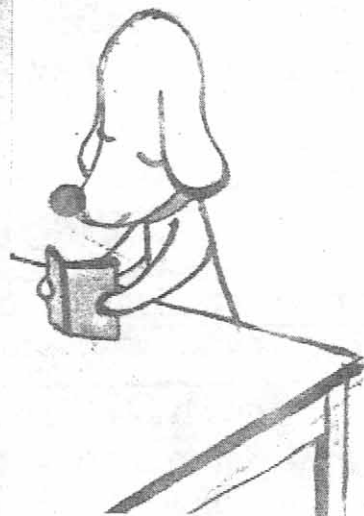
## Whadda-Whadda: Radical Zine Resource!



This is a distro born out of the 'What Do We Do When?: Community Response to Sexual Assault' zine project. Putting the zines tghtr has meant gathering heaps of resources around sexual assault. The idea of the distro is to make these, and a bunch of other sex positive and sexual health resources, available to folks who need them. The aim is to make all the resources as accessible as possible, this means that heaps of the zines are free, that trades are awesome and that everything is negotiable!

To order, ask questions or add stuff to the distro, email: [propertealistheft@riseup.net](mailto:propertealistheft@riseup.net)





Remember to take care of yourself.

Choose the environment you read this zine in. Take care to acknowledge that this is hard stuff and may be triggering.

Take time, this zine will still be there tmrw.  
Take time, find your friends to debrief, discuss, distract.

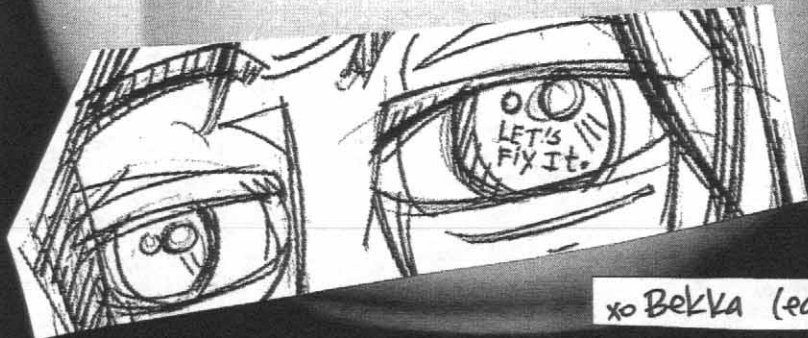
So here it is. Another contribution to the growing dialogue about sexual abuse and rape in the radical community. As w/the last two zines, this one too has been a struggle. I'm really not sure how I can come to absorb all these words and stories and then place them on these pages. But, just as the purpose of this zine, this project, is to nurture our communities w/resources on this topic. It is my own community that has nurtured me and meant that yeah, I can keep searching this stuff out, reading, thinking, talking, cuttin n' pastin.

It is not only my community, my friends that have supported me directly - encouraged me, advised me, let me vent (that's you

Soph!) but its also the nurturing that I get from my friends who challenge themselves to take care of not only each other but their own self.

Those who challenge themselves to start dialogue about things they are

passionate about: consent, mental health, gender. Those who make spaces for things like that to happen. Those who participate and engage and allow themselves to be challenged. That's the nurturing, strength and inspiration I thank my community for.

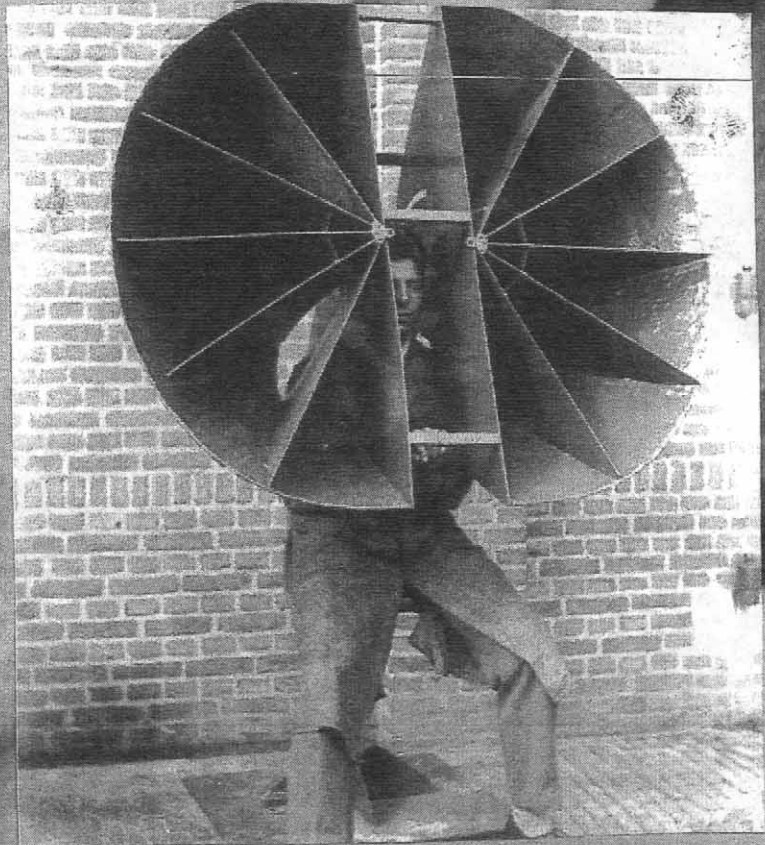


xo Bekka (early 2007)

do to be ok afterwards? It's helpful to make a plan of what's going to happen next, i.e. I'm going to go for a walk then make myself something to eat, or I'm going to take a shower and then watch a movie, we're going to play music or work in the garden. They are usually simple and self nurturing things, it's often good if they are a little bit physical/active.

Making a plan like this is especially helpful if you're on the phone with someone or you don't have an opportunity to check in with them later on. It's especially important to do this if you're worried that the person could hurt themselves or still needs ongoing support.

Ultimately these are skills you can acquire. There's lots of literature around about it. If you see a counselor, sometimes it's really helpful to ask them about the skills they have and use. You can practice reflective listening with anyone! You can be an active listener at any time, not just when you are supporting someone. These skills can also really come in handy when someone is trying to explain their political ideas to you, when they are trying to explain or show you how to do something new or complicated, when you're at a meeting.... the opportunities are countless!





also be really helpful to summarise when moving from one part topic of conversation to another. Being able to articulate "we spoke about \_\_\_\_, then you expressed your feelings around \_\_\_\_, etc... etc..." means you also have a way to close a conversation and to acknowledge what you both got out of it.

Reflection of feeling is less about what the person is actually saying, and checking in with them about the other things they are expressing. For example, if while the person is speaking, they are waving their arms about and becoming agitated, you could say "I get the sense that this stuff is really frustrating, would that be right?" Similarly if they are becoming teary or working really hard not to cry while they are talking, you could comment "It seems like this is really upsetting you, would that be accurate?" at that point you may want to offer to stop or take a break. Often a person won't come right out that they are angry, frustrated, sad, hurting, overwhelmed or that it's really hard to talk. Though it may be kinda obvious to you while you're listening and observing them, it's really important to check your observations with that person.

#### Other Things to Be Mindful Of

If you can't think of a response to what the person is saying, it's totally OK. You're not a bad or stupid person if you find that you cannot say anything when someone tells you about a traumatic event in their life or they express loss, grief or a sense of misery. Silence and simply breathing are ok. Often there really isn't anything that can be said in response. Sometimes what is needed is for you to just be there and hear the person say their story out loud. If you find yourself in a situation like that it may be useful to articulate things like "thank you for sharing this with me". It can sometimes be helpful at these times to acknowledge positive things about the speaker. It will depend on the context and your relationship with them. For example, you could say "sometimes it's real hard to ask someone for support, you're being very courageous right now".

Make sure you "match" where the speaker is at. By this I mean being aware of where they're at and pitching yourself in a similar place. Things like tone of voice, pace at which they are speaking, letting them direct change in topic and focus of the conversation.

I touched a little on being able to close a conversation earlier when talking about summarising. It's important not to just end a support conversation. Sometimes the end is signified by an drastic change in topic, though this is ok, it's still good to acknowledge that hard stuff has been spoken about at some point.

Check with the person how they are feeling at the end of your talking. What kinds of things can they (or the two of you together)

This is an excerpt taken from a novel called "Perdido St. Station" by China Miéville ...

... all others melted away. I hunted. Yagharek and you ... were linked. People whispered ... of your researches. Flying monsters and thaumaturgic machines. I knew that Yagharek had found what he sought. What he came a thousand miles for. You would deny justice, Grimneb'lin. I am here to ask you ... not to do that.

'It was finished. He was judged and punished. And it was over. We did not think ... we did not know that he might ... find a way ... that justice could be *retracted*.

'I am here to ask you not to help him fly.'

'Yagharek is my friend,' said Isaac steadily. 'He came to me and employed me. He was generous. When things ... went wrong ... got complicated and dangerous ... well, he was brave and he helped me - us. He's been part of ... of something extraordinary. And I owe him ... a life.' He glanced at Lin and then away again. 'I owe him ... for the times ... He was ready to die, you know? He could have died, but he stayed and without him ... I don't think I could have come through.'

Isaac spoke quietly. His words were sincere and affecting.

What did he do?

'What did he do?' said Isaac, defeated.

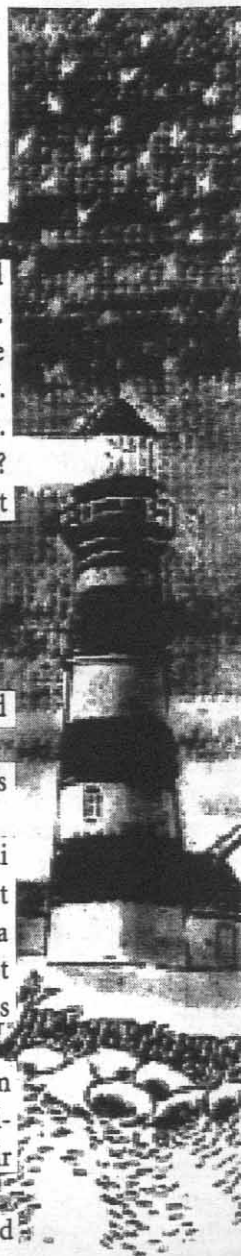
'He is guilty,' said Kar'uchai quietly, 'of choice-theft in the second degree, with utter disrespect.'

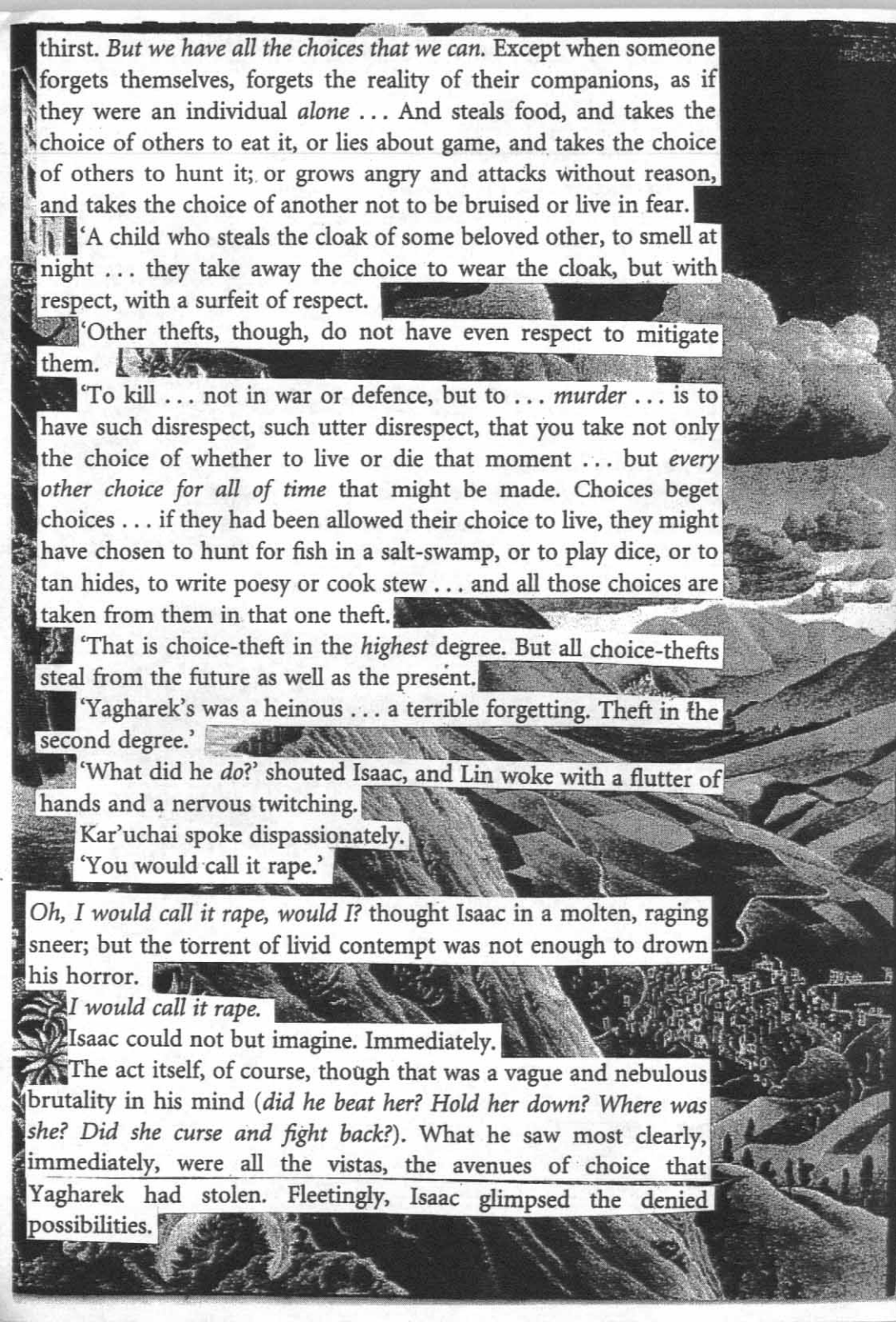
'What does that *mean*?' shouted Isaac. 'What did he *do*? What's fucking choice-theft anyway? This means *nothing* to me.'

'It is the only crime we *have*, Grimneb'lin,' replied Kar'uchai in a harsh monotone. 'To take the choice of another ... to forget their concrete reality, to abstract them, to forget that you are a node in a matrix, that actions have consequences. We must not take the choice of another being. What is community but a means to ... for all we individuals to have ... our *choices*.'

Kar'uchai shrugged and indicated the world around them vaguely. 'Your city institutions ... Talking and talking of individuals ... but crushing them in layers and hierarchies ... until their choices might be between three kinds of squalor.'

'We have far less, in the desert. We hunger, sometimes, and





thirst. *But we have all the choices that we can.* Except when someone forgets themselves, forgets the reality of their companions, as if they were an individual *alone* . . . And steals food, and takes the choice of others to eat it, or lies about game, and takes the choice of others to hunt it; or grows angry and attacks without reason, and takes the choice of another not to be bruised or live in fear.

'A child who steals the cloak of some beloved other, to smell at night . . . they take away the choice to wear the cloak, but with respect, with a surfeit of respect.

'Other thefts, though, do not have even respect to mitigate them.

'To kill . . . not in war or defence, but to . . . *murder* . . . is to have such disrespect, such utter disrespect, that you take not only the choice of whether to live or die that moment . . . but *every other choice for all of time* that might be made. Choices beget choices . . . if they had been allowed their choice to live, they might have chosen to hunt for fish in a salt-swamp, or to play dice, or to tan hides, to write poesy or cook stew . . . and all those choices are taken from them in that one theft.

'That is choice-theft in the *highest* degree. But all choice-thefts steal from the future as well as the present.

'Yagharek's was a heinous . . . a terrible forgetting. Theft in the second degree.'

'What did he *do*?' shouted Isaac, and Lin woke with a flutter of hands and a nervous twitching.

Kar'uchai spoke dispassionately.

'You would call it rape.'

*Oh, I would call it rape, would I?* thought Isaac in a molten, raging sneer; but the torrent of livid contempt was not enough to drown his horror.

*I would call it rape.*

Isaac could not but imagine. Immediately.

The act itself, of course, though that was a vague and nebulous brutality in his mind (*did he beat her? Hold her down? Where was she? Did she curse and fight back?*). What he saw most clearly, immediately, were all the vistas, the avenues of choice that Yagharek had stolen. Fleeting, Isaac glimpsed the denied possibilities.

to simply help that person express their trauma. If your personal thoughts & reactions are clouding that process, it's really unhelpful and makes a hard task impossible.

This is not to say that you're not allowed to react and have thoughts on what is happening. It's just that in this context it's not always appropriate. What's being asked of you is support, to listen and hear what is being said, that's all. In a perfect world there is a time for you to debrief from your listening and it is here that you express all of your own reactions, responses and feelings. These conversations are hard and draining for all involved. It's ok for you to say "naw, I just can't do this right now". If you do agree to be a listener, it's ok to stop for breaks, stretches, hugs, tea, chocolate, walks. If you have the opportunity, allow for a space that's private and comfortable in which to have the conversation.

### So What Do I Actually Do To Be A Reflective Listener?

Some folks like naming things and putting them under sub headings to help organise them in our brains and to learn them. Some folks have done this with the things we're talking about; they say that there are 3 "levels" of Reflective Listening:

1. Repeating or Rephrasing
2. Paraphrasing/Summarising
3. Reflection of feeling

Sometimes it feels really dumb to just repeat everything the person is saying. If it feels that way, don't do it, use another one. Often it can be helpful to repeat if there's been an interruption or the person has taken off on a tangent. Sometimes repeating helps you hear it again and understand what's being said.

Paraphrasing goes beyond a simple restatement to a level in which the listener makes a guess, or tests a hypothesis, about what the speaker means. "You mean that...?" or "I get the sense that..." or "When you say \_\_\_\_, do you mean \_\_\_\_?" These are tied into what's called Leading Questions. It's a way in which you're able to invite further clarification of what's being said.

For example, if the speaker was to say something like "I just can't deal with it anymore", you could respond by asking "When you say you can't deal with it any more, was there a time when dealing with it wasn't so overwhelming?". You could also ask direct questions about what "it" means or what "can't" means. These kinds of questions help you to gather more information about what's being said and helps you to understand it.

Summarizing statements provide a way to check whether accurate communication is occurring. You could say something along the lines of "Here's what I've heard \_\_\_\_. Tell me if I've missed anything". It provides an opportunity for clarification and amplification of what is being said. Summarizing also provides the speaker with concrete evidence that he or she is being heard. It can



# Reflective Listening

"Let us not underestimate how hard it is to listen and to be compassionate. Compassion is hard because it requires the inner disposition to go with others to the place where they are weakened, vulnerable, lonely and broken. But ... our spontaneous response ... is to do away with suffering by fleeing from it or finding a quick cure for it. As busy, active, relevant people we want to [make] a real contribution. This means first and foremost doing something to show that our presence makes a difference. And so we ignore our greatest gift, which is our ability to be there, to listen and to enter into solidarity with those who suffer."

Henri Nouwen

Reflective listening is the name of an approach used in counseling and social work. More accurately it's a set of skills that can assist us in supporting friends and loved ones who need to talk. There's a good introduction to this stuff in "Support" zine in which they term it "active listening".

This is not a problem-solving approach as such. However, it is the vehicle for getting there. When someone feels heard and understood it then becomes easier to take the steps needed to address problems. That is, assuming that's what needs to be done. The idea of this article is to give some info about strategies and skills we can use to help us become better allies and support people.

Reflective listening is listening that seeks understanding, not necessarily agreement. It seeks to understand both the meaning of what is being said aloud and what is not. The idea here is that often we struggle to be able to describe and name how we are feeling and what's inside our head. One of the best ways to support someone who has been hurt and traumatized speak about their experience, is to assist them to articulate what they are saying and for both the listener and speaker to understand what is being said. Reflective listening is an attentive, respectful, and non-judgmental.

## Where to start?

The concept of there being a set of skills you can think about and develop means that in a situation when someone comes to you for support, there is a role for you as a listener. There is a certain degree of separation that needs to exist for you to be able to do the work of a reflective listener. You need to be able to temporarily separate yourself from your "stuff" as it's the other person's stuff you're engaged with. Your role is to focus specifically on what the person is saying. It takes a lot of energy and mental concentration to stay with what a person is saying, to frame your responses and

The choice not to have sex, not to be hurt. The choice not to risk pregnancy. And then ... what if she had become pregnant? The choice not to abort? The choice not to have a child?

The choice to look at Yagharek with respect?

Isaac's mouth worked and Kar'uchai spoke again.

'It was my choice he stole.'

It took a few seconds, a ludicrously long time, for Isaac to understand what Kar'uchai meant. Then he gasped and stared at her, seeing for the first time the slight swell of her ornamental breasts, as useless as bird-of-paradise plumage. He struggled for something to say, but he did not know what he felt: there was nothing solid for words to express.

He murmured some appallingly loose apology, some solicitation.

'I thought you were ... the garuda magister ... or the militia, or something,' he said.

'We have none,' she replied.

'Yag ... a fucking rapist,' he hissed, and she clucked.

'He stole choice,' she said flatly.

'He raped you,' he said, and instantly Kar'uchai clucked again.

'He stole my choice,' she said. She was not expanding on his words, Isaac realized: she was correcting him. 'You cannot translate into your jurisprudence, Grimneb'lin,' she said. She seemed annoyed.

Isaac tried to speak, shook his head miserably, stared at her and again saw the crime committed, behind his eyes.

'You cannot translate, Grimneb'lin,' Kar'uchai repeated. 'Stop. I can see ... all the texts of your city's laws and morals that I have read ... in you.' Her tone sounded monotonous to him. The emotion in the pauses and cadences of her voice was opaque.

'I was not violated or ravaged, Grimneb'lin. I am not abused or defiled ... or ravished or spoiled. You would call his actions rape, but I do not: that tells me nothing. He stole my choice, and that is why he was ... judged. It was severe ... the last sanction but one ... There are many choice-thefts less heinous than his, and only a few more so ... And there are others that are judged equal ... many of those are actions utterly unlike Yagharek's. Some, you would not deem crimes at all.'



The actions vary: the *crime* ... is the theft of *choice*. Your magisters and laws ... that sexualize and sacralize ... for whom individuals are defined abstract ... their matrix-nature ignored ... where context is a distraction ... cannot grasp that.

'Do not look at me with eyes reserved for victims ... And when Yagharek returns ... I ask you to observe our justice - Yagharek's justice - not to impute your own.'

'He stole choice, in the second highest degree. He was judged. The band voted. That is the end.'

*Is it? thought Isaac. Is that enough? Is that the end?*

Kar'uchai watched him struggle.

Lin called to Isaac, clapping her hands like a clumsy child. He knelt quickly and spoke to her. She signed anxiously at him and he signed back as if what she said made sense, as if they were conversing.

She was calmed, and she hugged him and looked nervously up at Kar'uchai with her unbroken compound eye.

'Will you observe our judgement?' said Kar'uchai quietly. Isaac looked at her quickly. He busied himself with Lin.

Kar'uchai was silent for a long time. When Isaac did not speak, she repeated her question. Isaac turned to her and shook his head, not in denial but confusion.

'I don't know,' he said. 'Please ...'

He turned back to Lin, who slept. He slumped against her and rubbed his head.

After minutes of silence, Kar'uchai stopped her swift pacing and called his name.

He started as if he had forgotten she was there.

'I will leave. I ask you again. Please do not mock our justice. Please let our judgement be.' She moved the chair from the door and stalked out. Her taloned feet scratched at the old wood as she descended.

And Isaac sat and stroked Lin's iridescent carapace - marbled now with stress-fractures and lines of cruelty - thinking about Yagharek.

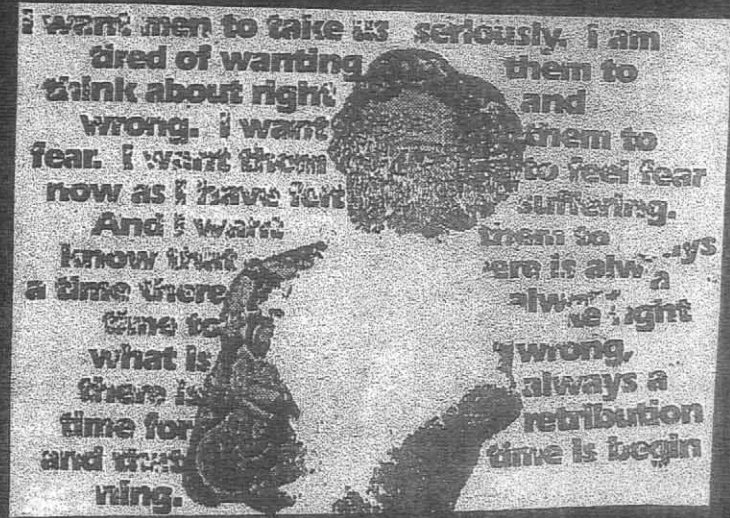
*Do not translate,* Kar'uchai had said, but how could he not?

He thought of Kar'uchai's wings shuddering with rage as she was pinioned by Yagharek's arms. Or had he threatened with a knife? A weapon? A fucking *whip*?

reject and alienate ourselves and each other. Yes, it is difficult to admit, but we must be honest with ourselves and each other if we are ever to heal. Just imagine how different our lives would be today if we were not injured by internalized misogyny and sexism. Imagine how different our lives would be if we would only open our mouths wide and collectively and loudly confront males and *really* hold them accountable for the violent crimes they perpetrate against females. Imagine how our lives would be if all mothers told their daughters the truth about romantic love and taught them to love themselves as females, to value and claim their bodies, and to protect themselves against violent and disrespectful males.

Readjusting our lens so we can begin to see ourselves and each other as full, capable, and mighty human beings will take as much work as reconstructing our violent society. Neither job is easy, but the conditions and the tasks go hand in hand.

Two ways we can begin our own transformation are to become physically active in whatever manner we choose so we can take pleasure in fully connecting to ourselves and in growing physically stronger, and to respect, protect, support, and comfort each other. Once we stop denying that our very lives are endangered, we will soon discover that these steps are not only necessary but viable ways to empower ourselves and claim our right to exist as whole human beings in a peaceful, humane world.



I want men to take us seriously. I am tired of wanting them to think about right and wrong. I want them to feel fear now as I have felt suffering. And I want men to know that there is always a time for what is right. There is always a time for retribution. Time is beginning.



ndemeath. And don't ask me why, but I never, ever thought that the boys were stronger  
d faster and braver than I. Many of them could not compete against me, especially in races.  
rtunately, I had yet to encounter the myth that boys are inherently better athletes than girls.  
never occurred to me to be worried about being a girl who is acting like a boy. I only did  
hat was natural. I was in love with my body, so if it enjoyed doing wild things, I had to  
ake it happy.

eing in this intimate relationship with my young body, I grew to understand and confirm  
ree things: My body belongs exclusively to me; my soul is not at rest when my body is  
atched; and we (body and soul) must take good care of each other. As a black woman-  
ild living in a predominantly white, suburban world, I had to find ways to invent an affirmative  
ality, and I used my body to help me cement the cracks in my soul that were split open by  
e daily onslaught of racism that prevailed outside my home and sexism that permeated the  
inside it.

### A CALL FOR SELF EXAMINATION AND TRUE CHANGE

I am certain, however, that while toady we females cannot control the  
violent world in which we live, we must take control over our  
bodies. To me, it is at least one step we can take to challenge this  
rape culture in which we live. In protecting  
ourselves, we must realize that we cannot afford to  
continue dissociating our bodies from our souls. We  
must claim ourselves as whole human beings. When  
we are empowered physically, we are both spiritually and  
physically strong. Being in tune with our bodies helps us  
to trust our instincts. We are aware  
of what is going on around us and  
are able to guard ourselves  
against danger. When and if we are in  
danger, we are able to rely on our physical  
selves as much as  
possible to free  
ourselves from harm because we know and  
trust our strength. When our souls are  
connected to our bodies, we do not allow our  
bodies to be taken for granted or to be taken away from  
us – a least not without a struggle.

We must realize how much we, ourselves, perpetuate our rape culture when we abandon,

Fuck them, he would think suddenly, staring at the  
engine's parts. I don't owe their laws respect . . . Free the prisoners.  
That was what *Runagate Rampant* always said.

But the Cymek garuda did not live like the citizens of New  
Crobuzon. There were no magisters, Isaac remembered, no courts  
or punishment factories, no quarries and dumps to pack with  
Remade, no militia or politicians. Punishment was not doled out  
by backhanding bosses.

Or so he had been told. So he remembered. *The band voted,*  
Kar'uchai had said.

Was that true? Did that change things?

In New Crobuzon punishment was for someone. Some interest  
was served. Was that different in the Cymek? Did that make the  
crime more heinous?

Was a garuda rapist worse than a human one?

*Who am I to judge?* Isaac thought in sudden anger, and stormed  
towards his engine, picked up his calculations, ready to continue,  
but then, *Who am I to judge?* he thought, in sudden hollow  
uncertainty, the ground taken from under him, and he put his  
papers down slowly.

He kept glancing at Lin's thighs. Her bruises had almost gone,  
but his memory of them was as savage a stain as they had been.

They had mottled her in suggestive patterns around her lower  
belly and inner thighs.

Lin shifted and woke and held him and shied away in fear and  
Isaac's teeth set at the thought of what might have been done to  
her. He thought of Kar'uchai.

*This is all wrong,* he thought. *That's just exactly what she told  
you not to do. This isn't about rape, she said . . .*

But it was too hard. Isaac could not do it. If he thought of  
Yagharek he thought of Kar'uchai, and if he thought of her he  
thought of Lin.

*This is all arse-side up,* he thought.

If he took Kar'uchai at her word, he could not judge the  
punishment. He could not decide whether he respected garuda  
justice or not: he had no grounds at all, he knew nothing of the  
circumstances. So it was natural, surely, it was inevitable and  
healthy, that he should fall back on what he knew: his sceptic-



ism; the fact that Yagharek was his friend. Would he leave his friend flightless because he gave alien laws the benefit of the doubt?

He remembered Yagharek scaling the Glasshouse, fighting beside him against the militia.

He remembered Yagharek's whip savaging the slake-moth, ensnaring it, freeing Lin.

But when he thought of Kar'uchai, and what had been done to her, he could not but think of that as *rape*. And he thought of Lin, and everything that might have been done to her, until he felt as if he would puke with anger.

He tried to extricate himself.

He tried to think himself away from the whole thing. He told himself desperately that to refuse his services would *not* imply judgement, that it would *not* mean he pretended knowledge of the facts, that it would simply be a way of saying, 'This is beyond me, this is not my business.' But he could not convince himself.

He slumped and breathed a miserable moan of exhaustion. If he turned from Yagharek, he realized, no matter what he said, Isaac would feel himself to have judged, and to have found Yagharek wanting. And Isaac realized that he could not in conscience imply that, when he did not know the case.

But on the heels of that thought came another; a flipside, a counterpoint.

If withholding help implied negative judgement he could not make, thought Isaac, then helping, bestowing flight, would imply that Yagharek's actions were *acceptable*.

And that, thought Isaac in cold distaste and fury, he *would not do*.

He folded his notes slowly, his half-finished equations, his scribbled formulae, and began to pack them away.

to work on becoming whole again.

I knew that I was growing stronger (although in silent isolation from other young women and through intense struggle) when I was able to successfully resist being seduced (read: molested) by several college classmates and when I successfully fought off the violent advances and verbal abuse (that I know recognize as attempted rape) of someone with whom I had once been sexually intimate.

But how does a woman become strong and whole in a society in which women are not permitted (as if we need permission!) to possess ourselves, to own our very bodies? We females often think we are not entitled to ourselves, and many times give ourselves away for less than a song. The sad truth of the matter is that this how we have managed to survive in our male-dominated culture. Yet in the wise words of the late Audre Lorde, "The Master's tools will never dismantle the Master's house." In other words, as long as we remain disconnected from ourselves and each other and dependent on abusive males, we will remain weak, powerless and fragmented.

#### A NOT-SO-AMBIGUOUS BEGINNING

I am cute and 3yrs old. My mother has braided my hair and decorated it with red barrettes. I sit on the edge of the couch dressed in a red checkered jumper that ties at the back. I swing my legs back and forth, back and forth. I lift and spread them in the air. I am making a discovery. I am in awe of my long legs and the way they move. My body tingles with pleasure. This is how a sparrow must feel while soaring freely in the sky. "Don't ever do that again," my father says. "Always sit with your legs closed." Suddenly my joy is squelched by the strange tone of his voice, and I crash. This is a recurring and haunting memory.

Had I been my brother, I would not have been scolded for exploring my physical prowess. I would not have been commanded to stop my arousing behaviour. My father was only doing his duty: to control me and to train me to be his proper, feminine little girl. But what is so wrong about a girl knowing and appreciating a body? Whose body is it, anyway? My tender, indomitable spirit would not surrender.

In discovering quite early that there is a strong and essential connection between body and soul, I could not stop loving and moving my legs. I simply moved my body out of my father's sight whenever my soul wanted to enter into the purely physical world that liberated me from my constrictive surroundings. In that other world, I ran races, climbed trees, roller skated, hopscotched, and tussled with neighborhood boys while wearing dresses with shorts.





because I felt violated; I felt separated from my body, as if it didn't belong to me. But at sixteen I didn't know how or what to feel, except that I felt confused and desperately wanted to make sense of what it

meant to be a girl trapped inside a woman's body. Yes, I felt trapped, because I understood that we girls had so much to lose now that we could get pregnant. Life sagged with seriousness. Now everybody kept an eye on us: our parents, the churches, the schools, the boys. Confusion prevailed. Although we were encouraged to have a slight interest in boys (lest we turn out "funny") so that ultimately we could be trained to become good wives, we were instructed directly and indirectly to keep a safe distance from them.

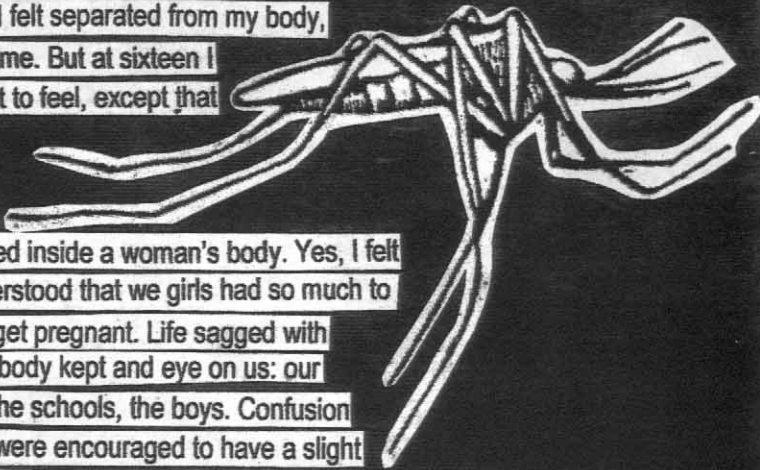
We liked boys and we thought we wanted love, but what we really wanted was to have some fun, some clean, innocent fun until we got married and gave our virtuous selves to our husbands just as our mothers had done. We female children had inherited this lovely vision from our mothers and from fairy tales. Yet now we know those visions were not so much what our mothers had experienced but what they wished they had experienced - and what they wanted for us.

I soon learned in high school that it was normal to be mistreated by our boyfriends. Why else would none of us admit to each other the abuse we tolerated? These boys supposedly loved us, so we believed they were entitled to treat us in any way they chose. We believed that somehow we belonged to them, body and soul. Isn't that what so many of the songs on the radio said? And we just knew somehow that if we did give in we still deserved whatever happened. Such abuse was rampant because we became and remained isolated from each other by hoisting our romances above our friendships.

We didn't define what they did to us as rape, molestation or sexual abuse. We called it love. We called it love if it happened with our boyfriends, and we called what happened to other girls whores and sluts if it happened with someone else's boyfriends or boyfriends.

### REALIZATION

One sharp slap from Max one day delivered the good sense I had lost somehow when I got to high school. After that, I refused to be his woman, his property. When I left home for college, I left with the keen awareness that I had better take good care of myself. In my involvement with Max, I had allowed a split to occur between my body and my soul, and I had



## these words have to land somewhere...

These words have to land somewhere, and in the absence of trust, or is it support? they fall, shaken and broken hearted onto white screens.

In the absence of strong communities I learn to write, and weave borrowed stories with my own.

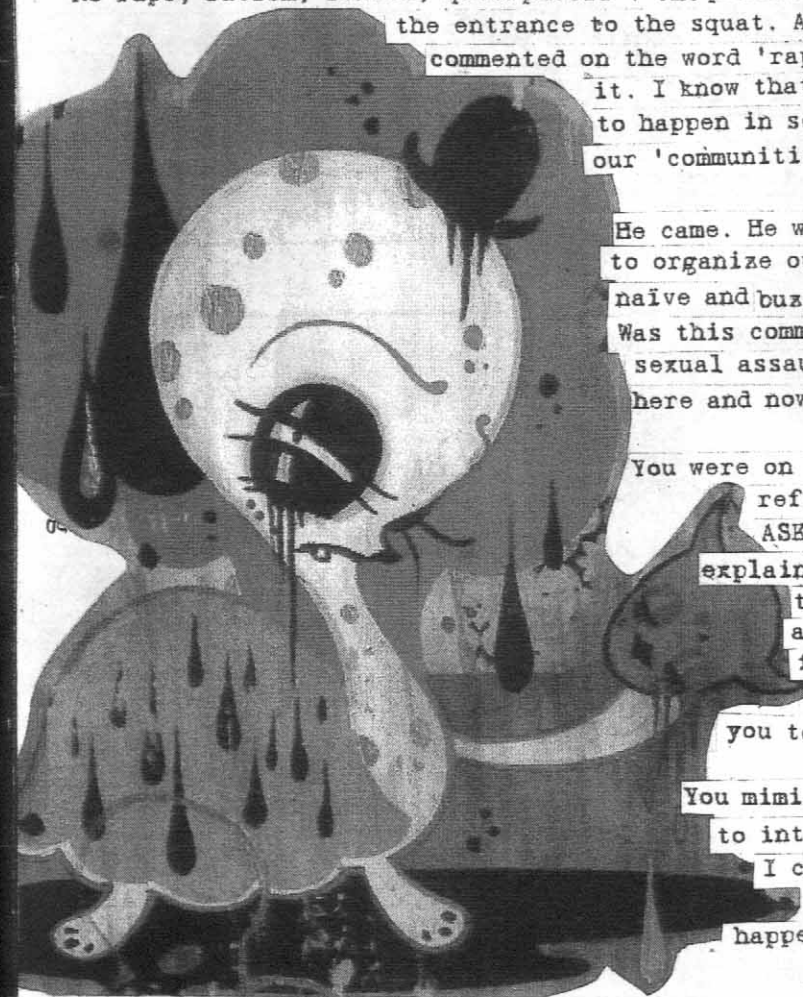
It was a party this time. Yesterday it was a home, tomorrow a playground. Oh how I hate you. He had been asked not to come. I had received the call, a man called out for sexual assault might be coming to the gig, a woman was needing support. Was there anything I could do? In the absence of further support (a common theme) I made a poster- 'Let's make this a safer space. Free from all forms of abuse. No rape, racism, sexism, queerphobia'. The poster was stuck up near

the entrance to the squat. And to those who commented on the word 'rape' I fucking mean it. I know that rape continues to happen in so many spaces, and our 'communities' are not exempt.

He came. He was spotted. We met to organize our response, and I naive and buzzed was excited. Was this community response to sexual assault happening here and now?

You were on the roof and you refused to leave. We ASKED you nicely, explaining the situation that we had been asked by people who felt unsafe in your presence to ask you to leave.

You mimicked us. You tried to intimidate us. Sure, I can't prove that the 'called out' abuse happened, and the rape



was not my skin and soul that had been violated.

But in these moments this didn't matter, what mattered was that people felt unsafe in your presence and that we were giving you an opportunity to responsibly deal with the situation, by leaving. By walking away, by stopping drinking, by quieting your voice, by not pushing me, by not continuing relationships of abuse and oppression. You refused you dumb fuck.

You made some stupid argument about your rights to be there in the space while others sat outside in tears, others left the party. I cried. In those moments when you put your finger in my face, told me I was pathetic and naive and then pushed me..

I hated you.

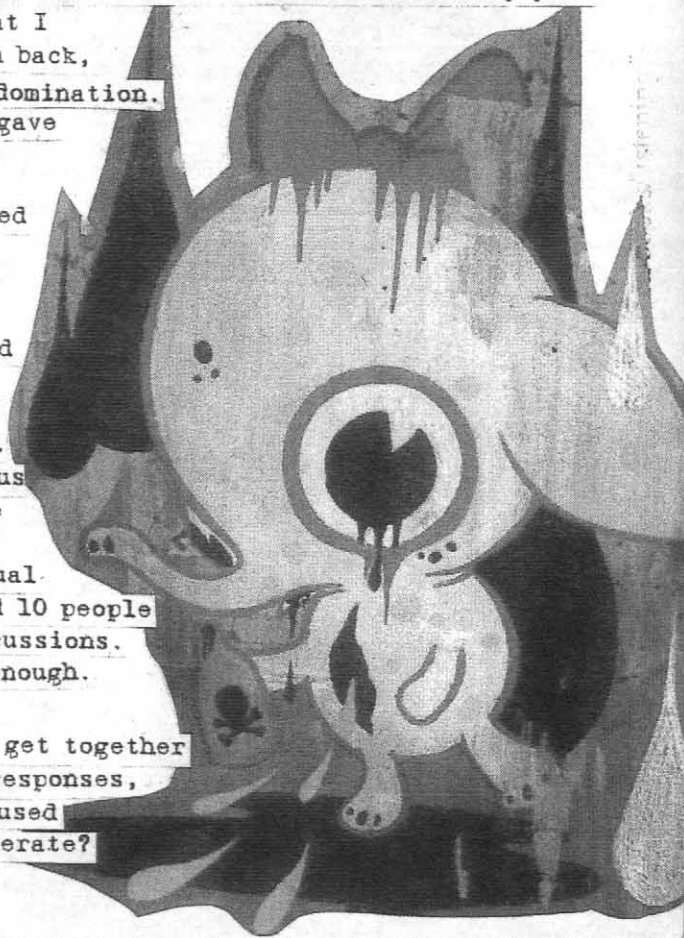
And everything that has bred you.

But you continued to drink, smirk on your face, comforted by your safety and assumption that I wouldn't fight back, push back, break down boundaries of domination. And we let you do it. We gave you a choice.

You got up again and danced in front of me, claiming your space aggressively (did you notice I didn't shrink back you jerk). And that was it.

We didn't know what to do. We were a crew of ambitious peoples wanting to create safer spaces and support community response to sexual assault. There were around 10 people actively involved in discussions. One man. One. It wasn't enough.

Where to from here? Do we get together and discuss strategies, responses, protocol? What if the accused oppressor refuses to cooperate?



## WHOSE BODY IS IT, ANYWAY? Pamela R. Fletcher

(taken from Transforming A Rape Culture, edited by Emilie Buchwald, Pamela R. Fletcher & Martha Roth)

### DENIAL

While writing this essay, I had difficulty thinking about my own related experiences. I hadn't experienced rape. Or had I? For months, in the hard drive of my subconscious mind, I searched for files that would yield any incident, of sexual violence or sexual terrorism. When certain memories surfaced, I questioned whether those experiences were real rapes. I have some very early recollections that challenge me: Max, my first boyfriend, my childhood sweetheart, tried to pressure me into having sex with him when we were in junior high. Two of my friends, who were the girlfriends of his two closest friends, also tried to pressure me because they were already "doing it" for their "men". "Don't be a baby," they teased. "Everybody's doing it."

But I wouldn't cave in, and I broke up with Max because he wasn't a decent boy.

A year later, when we reached high school, I went crawling back to Max because I thought I loved him and couldn't stand his ignoring me. He stopped ignoring me long enough to pin me up against the locker and kiss me roughly and to suck on my neck long and hard, until he produced sore, purple bruises, what we called hickies. I had to hide those hideous marks from my parents by wearing turtle neck sweaters. Those hickies marked me as his property and gave his friends the impression that he had done me, even though we hadn't gotten that far yet. We still had to work out the logistics.

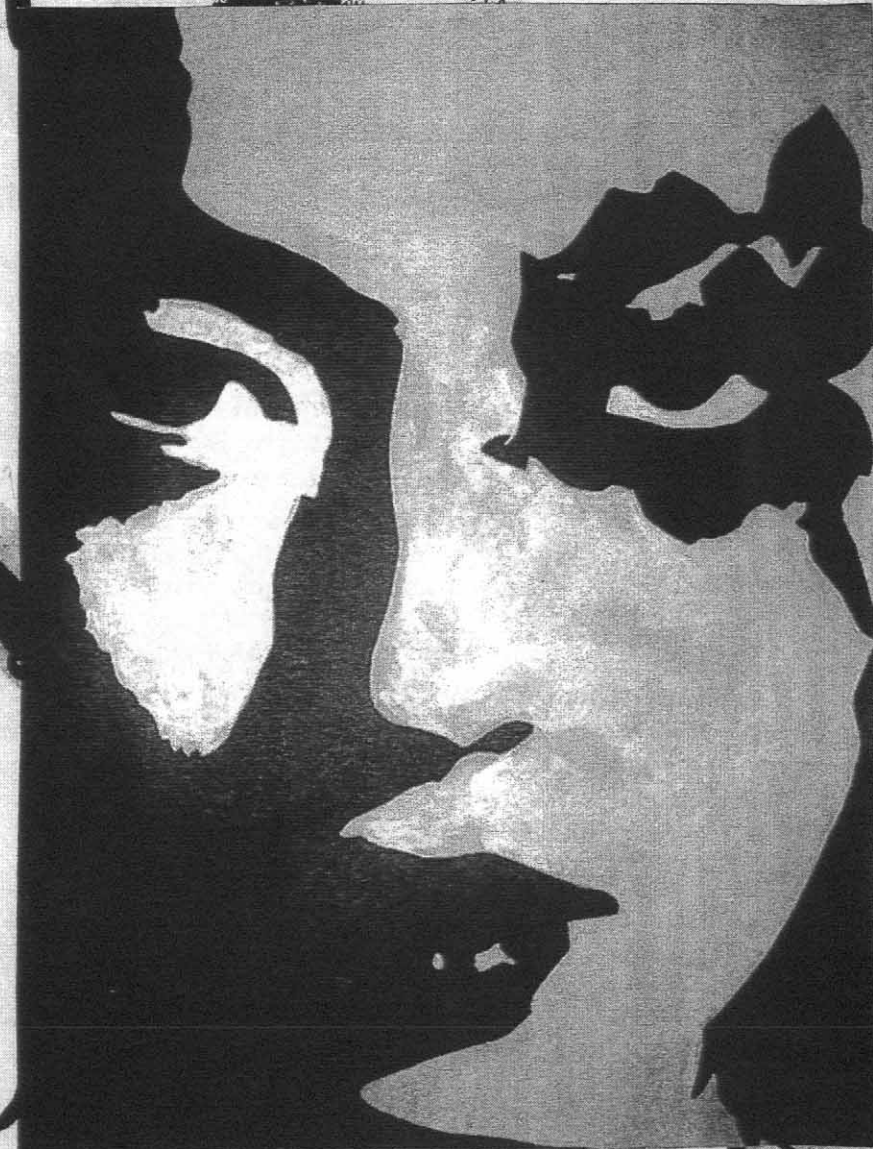
I hated when he gave me hickies, and I didn't like his exploring my private places as he emotionally and verbally abused me, telling me I wasn't pretty like Susan: "Why can't you look more like her?" I remember saying something like: "Why don't you go be with her if that's what you want?" He answered me with a piercing don't-you-ever-talk-to-me-like-that-again look, and I never asked again. He continued, however, to ask me the same question.

In my heart, I realized that the way he treated me was wrong



but also the wider community, where we only know each other through passing, or through things we've noticed each other say, do and stand up for. Sometimes it's just a knowing smile. At times I felt very uncomfortable being in that town, where so much negativity had occurred for me, sometimes I felt isolated and unsure. But every time I felt like giving up something wonderful, even if it was very small, would happen.

However we deal with it, we gotta deal with it.



Is there a time when we can/should use physical force?

Is a party really the time to address these issues?

What other spaces can we create to work through this?

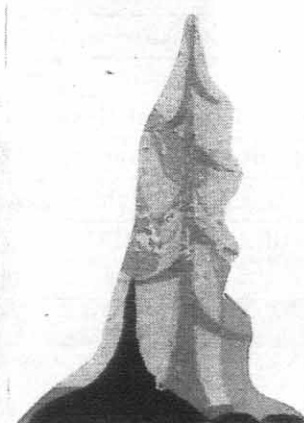
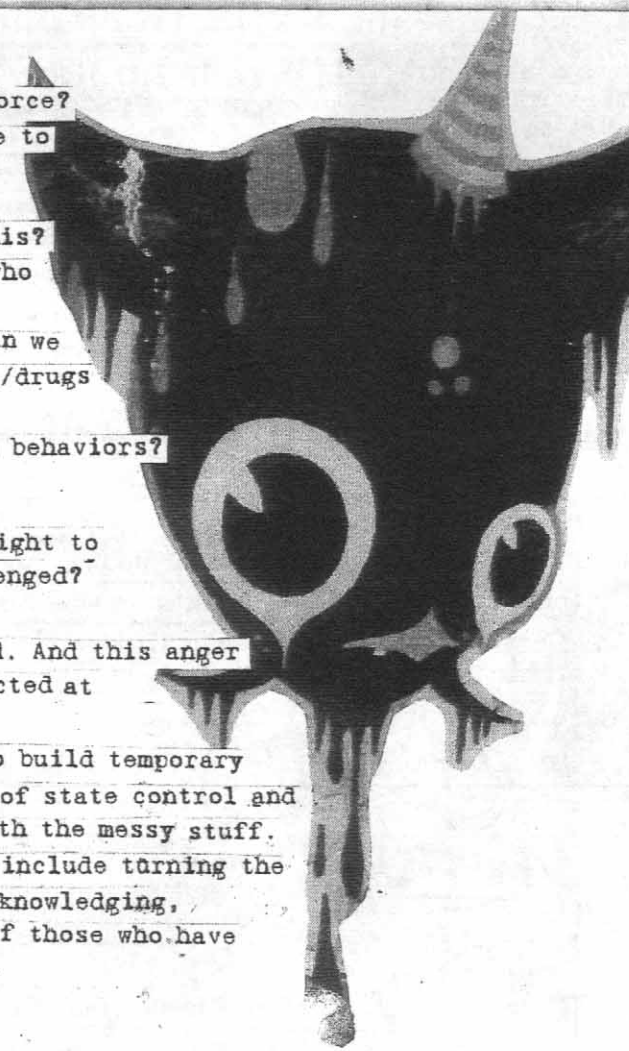
How can we support those who feel unsafe to come to gigs/shows/events? How can we move beyond using alcohol/drugs as weapons to guard our responsibility for our own behaviors?

Does the rapist have the right to walk into parties unchallenged?

I am angry and disappointed. And this anger and disappointment is directed at our communities.

If we are really wanting to build temporary autonomous zones, outside of state control and regulation we must deal with the messy stuff. Sometimes this just might include turning the music off and noticing, acknowledging, standing up for the pain of those who have been and continue to hurt.

Bla.



# I Want A 24hr Truce During Which

## There Is No Rape

Andrea Dworkin

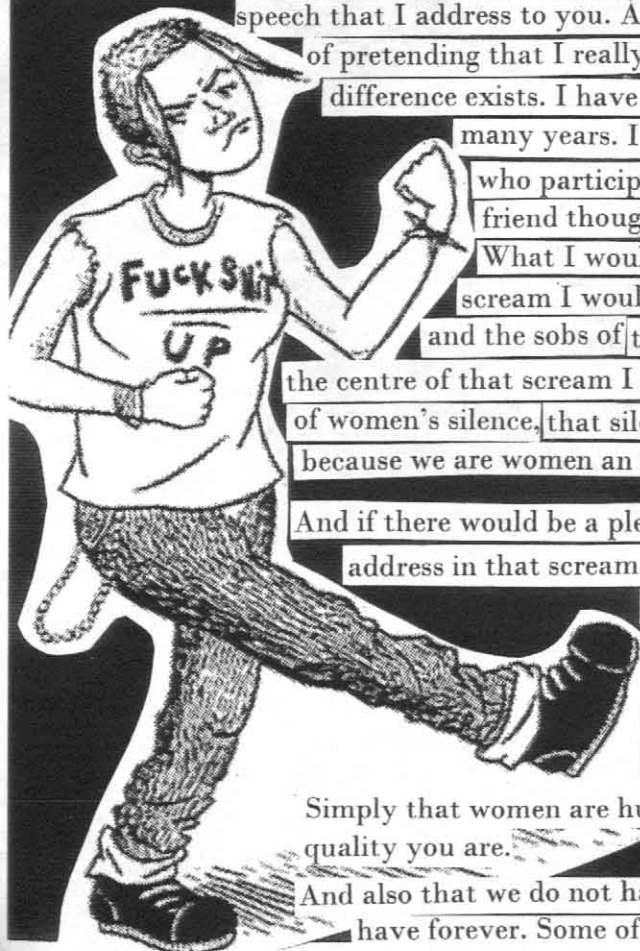
*This is an excerpt of a speech given at the Midwest regional conference of the National Organisation for Changing Men in the fall of 1983 in St. Paul Minnesota. It was an audience of 500 men, with scattered women. In a sense [this] was a feminist dream come true. What would you say to 500 men if you could? This is what I said, how I used my chance. The men reacted with considerable love and support and also with considerable anger. Both.*

I have thought a great deal about how a feminist, like myself addresses an audience primarily of political men who say that they are anti-sexist. And I thought a lot about whether there should be a qualitative difference in the kind of speech that I address to you. And then I found myself incapable of pretending that I really believe that that qualitative difference exists. I have watched the men's movement for many years. I am close with some of the people who participate in it. I can't come here as a friend though I might very much want to. What I would like to do is scream: and in that scream I would have the screams of the raped, and the sobs of the battered; and even worse, at the centre of that scream I would have the deafening sound of women's silence, that silence into which we are born because we are women in which most of us die.

And if there would be a plea or a question or a human address in that scream, it would be this: why are you so slow? Why are you so slow to understand the simplest things; not the complicated ideological things. You understand those. The simple things. The clichés.

Simply that women are human to precisely the degree and quality you are.

And also that we do not have time. We women. We don't have forever. Some of us don't have another week or



against the queen, actually. I quite liked putting my head on that tilt. Not for any liking of the queen or the system, in fact quite far from it. I guess I liked the security it gave me that it was not so much about me, but about the community saying no. Not just some girl kicking up shit.

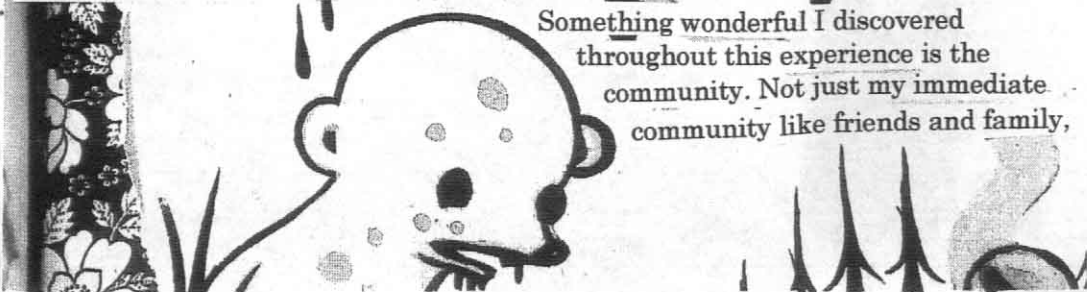
Not only had I had to contend with the whispers and rumours, but also on the stand I had to listen to the ridiculous and quite graphic lie fuelled defence. I knew this was not personally against me, that this was the defences job, but holy crapsticks did it make me angry. There were moments in between when I had to testify to waiting for the verdict where you could cut the air with a knife. I was shaking and tense. What if he got away with it? What if, after all this bravery and effort I'd still be let down? Would that mean that in the public eye the assault never occurred? Were my very personal feelings and hurts to be invalidated? I had to think about this. Even though in my counselling sessions I'd looked at this possibility, it wasn't until on the brink of being confronted with it the reality kicked in. I sat tall. I stretched. I felt, that even if that were the case, it'd just make me stand that little bit taller. We can't let ourselves be victim of circumstance. Apart of, and affected by, yes, but broken? Let's not.

### The Verdict

Sitting back in the courthouse, myself in the middle with my 3 favourite women beside me was amazing. It was intense, scary, and absolutely 2nd only to giving birth, the most powerful moment of my life. As a sisterhood we sat there trembling, waiting for the verdict to be delivered. A jury is made up of the accused peers. This thought had always worried me. But I had nothing to fear. When the spokesperson from the jury stood up and read, in a very quiet voice, that the jury had found the accused unanimously beyond reasonable doubt guilty, my heart stopped.

There were no cheers or victory dances. There were no celebratory smiles. There was no real "victory". But I had made my stand. I take no pleasure from this. I take pride in knowing that I stood up and said, "This is not on". It fills me with goeyness that I may in some way help someone else through her hard times. But knowing that one man made some very wrong decisions and now has to pay does not make me smile. It's not mine to ponder, it's all his. No one made him make his choices, and no one else has to suffer his consequence.

Something wonderful I discovered throughout this experience is the community. Not just my immediate community like friends and family,





reated very well by the hospital staff. The crisis lady on call said she had to get out of bed to respond to my case, this pissed me off greatly, but in the end, her dish delivered.

took time out, I thought about it and decided the best thing I knew to do was to go through the legal system and press charges. The police on call that night were wonderful and I grew to have quite a lot of respect for them. The whole process was hard and took a long time. The first time he was meant to enter a plea I went to the court, despite all things discouraging me. I wanted to be there while at least had the guts to admit to his bullshit or skulk like a coward. He chose the latter, and his excuse was sleepwalking. Yeah sure, he'd fucked me while I was sleeping, but he was sleepwalking so all's sweet as, right? Ha! Oh my. So it was to go to trial with a full jury, despite the fact it would have been better for him to tell the truth, truth. He was not granted bail and refused his offer of \$50,000 and a house as collateral. The judges words were "I don't care how much money you have or how many houses your sister puts up, you will not be making bail". It was wonderful to see it being taken that seriously. As it indeed should.

All in all the process took about 18 months, for the most of which he remained in custody. He was eventually released on strict probation due to the fact that he was taking the sleepwalking stance. A case of that kind had never been tried in Australia, which brought quite a profile in the media. There was a case in the USA where a man had got in his car, drove across town and shot his ex-wife and drove back across town and claimed sleepwalking as defense successfully. In England a man had thrown a T.V over the head of his pregnant girlfriend and he also claimed sleepwalking but was dismissed directly. A man in Australia had started the case and with him being in custody at the time it slowed down proceeding's a couple of years, so the judge thought it best so doctors could be sought out of remand and hopefully making the whole thing less traumatic on the time front. His conditions were he was not to be in my town and be nowhere near me at any time. He broke that in the first half hour, but then after that all went quite well. I did get random text messages from his phone, and lots of stuff was going down about the place but I just kept walking my walk.

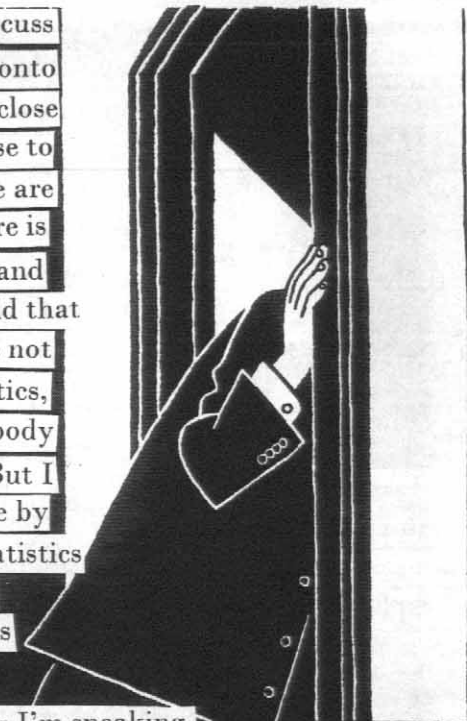
When the day of trial had finally come I was freaking out big time. I have piercings, colourful hair and tattoos. A jury based on 12 of his peers worried me. My community out west was a judgmental one. Would they look at me and instantly dismiss everything I was fighting for? I was asked by my lawyer upon arrival if I could please take those things out. I physically couldn't, they've been there way too long to remove without tools. I started to worry a little, I didn't have a point to prove other than the fact that rape is not acceptable in our world, and the importance of voicing that. Something that I learned was that when an assault has happened to you, you are not the victim but the witness of a crime against the state. A crime

another day to take time for you to discuss whatever it is that will enable you to go out onto those streets and do something. We are very close to death. All women are. And we are very close to rape and we are very close to beating. And we are inside a system of humiliation from which there is no escape for us. We use statistics not to try and quantify the injuries, but to convince the world that those injuries even exist. Those statistics are not abstractions. It is easy to say, "Ah, the statistics, somebody writes them up one way and somebody writes them up another way". That's true. But I hear about the rapes one by one by one by one by one, which is also how they happen. Those statistics are not abstract to me. Every three minutes a woman is being raped. Every eighteen seconds a woman is being beaten. There is nothing abstract about it. It is happening right now as I'm speaking.

And it is happening for a simple reason. There is nothing complex and difficult about the reason. Men are doing it, because the kind of power that men have over women. That power is real, concrete, exercised from one body to another body., exercised by someone who feels he has the right to exercise it, exercised in public and exercised in private. It is the sum and substance of women's oppression.

It is not done 5000 miles away or 3000 miles away. It is done here and it is done now and it is done by people in this room as well as by other contemporaries: our friends, our neighbors, people that we know. Women don't have to go to school to learn about power. We just have to be women, walking down the street, trying to get the housework done after giving one's body in marriage and then having no rights over it.

The power exercised by men day to day in life is power that is institutionalized. It is protected by law. It is protected by religion and religious practice. It is protected by universities, which are strongholds of male supremacy. It is protected by a police force. It is protected by those who Shelley called "the unacknowledged legislators of the world": the poets, the artists. Against that



power we have silence.

It is an extraordinary thing to try and understand and confront why it is that that men believe – and men do believe – that they have a right to rape. Men may not believe it when they are asked. Everybody raise your hand who believes you have a right to rape. Not many hands will go up. It's in life that men believe they have the right to force sex, which they don't call rape. And it is an extraordinary thing to try and understand that men really believe that they have the right to hit and to hurt.

That is the way the power of men is manifest in real life. That is what theory about male supremacy is about. It means you can rape. It means you can hurt. It means you can buy and sell women. Not just on street corners but in the workplace. That's another right that you can presume to have: sexual access to any woman in your environment, when you want.

Now, the men's movement suggests that men don't want that kind of power that I have just described. I've actually heard explicit whole sentences to that effect. And yet, everything is a reason not to do something about changing the fact that you do have that power.

Hiding behind guilt, that's my favorite. I love that one. Oh, it's horrible, yes, and I'm so sorry. You have the time to feel guilty. We don't have the time for you to feel guilty. Your guilt is a form of acquiescence in what continues to occur. Your guilt keeps things the way they are.

But mostly your guilt, your suffering, reduces to: gee, we really feel so bad. Everything makes men feel so bad: what you do, what you don't do, what you want to do, what you don't want to do but are going to do anyway.

I think most of your distress is: gee, we really feel so bad. And I'm sorry that you feel so bad – so uselessly and stupidly bad – because there is a way in which this is really your tragedy. And I don't mean because you can't cry. And I don't mean because there is no real intimacy in your lives. And I don't mean because the armor that you have to live with as men is stultifying: and I don't doubt that it is. But I don't mean any of that. You damn



### A state o' confrontation.. Poxy Conway

From where I sat, rape was an eye for an eye kinda situation. When I was personally confronted with it, that is. Before that I thought wiping the scum out who would do such a thing to be quite fair. I guess this ideology was ripped apart and inspected much more in these circumstances. All I wanted was some kinda justice, whatever that may be. I was very satisfied with the thought of neutering him. You don't deserve genitals if that is what you are going to do with them. I plotted many tacts. My close family and friends were already becoming aware of the situation, situation in case was an intrusion upon my sleeping body by my mothers partner. I saw myself as a fighter but that took the fight out of my hands and I was left to grieve and reassess my outlook. With the growing involvement of those around me I had many serious offers of taking him out, holding him down and looking into his eyes as he has done to him what he saw fit to bestow upon me. I didn't want his blood on anyone else's hands, and I didn't see how I could do what needed to be done without serious repercussion, as was the nature of the beastie I was dealing with. I've since thought of many alternatives, but that was then and this now, so on the story goes.

The night it happened the police were called. My arrival home and state of destruction were met with severe concern. I was punching walls and crying, I scrubbed myself in the shower with steel wool until I bled. I sat and sobbed helplessly and then the police arrived. They took me to the station and I gave a statement. No pressure they said, but in case I decided to press charges the details would be fresh. I gave said statement then went off to the hospital to complete the rape kit. I was poked and prodded, but all in well



learning about patriarchy) then chances are you have abused someone. If you have or have had any sort of sexual/physical interaction with another person without first receiving full, verbal consent, then you are an abuser or a rapist. If you know this, and you intentionally attempt to have any sort of physical interaction with another person without their full, verbal consent or coerce them into giving it, then you are not a player, or a ladies' man, or even cool, you are an asshole and I know many womyn out there will stick a knife in your gut when they find out. It's time to start analyzing what society has taught you and how you live your life, past and present.

This letter is proof that men can fight patriarchy too. It is not a womyn's-only struggle. There's more to the fight than just



spelling "woman" funny or being PC around our friends or letting a womyn carry heavy loads too. Let's get on with it already.

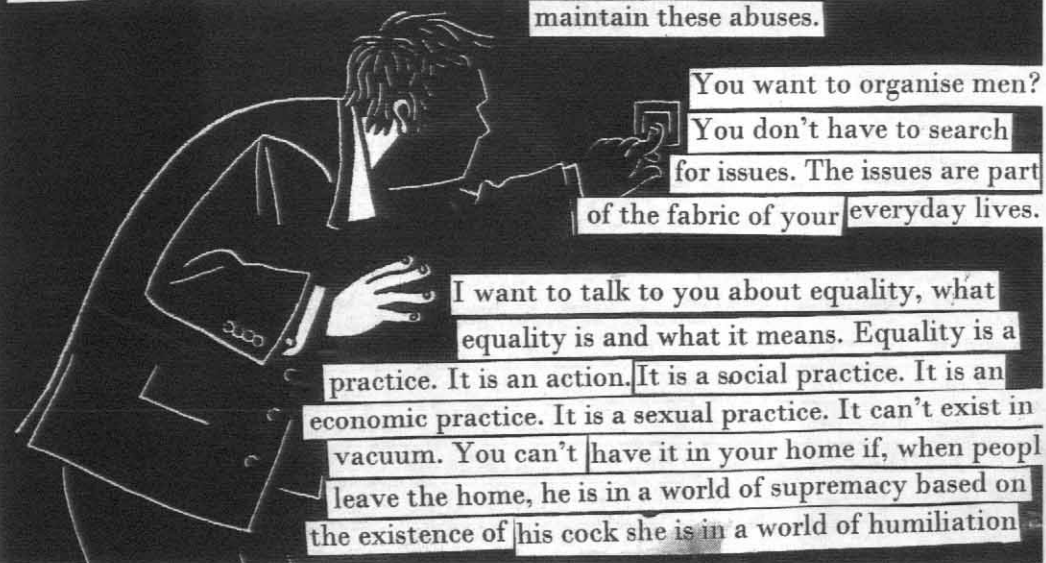
*Feedback is welcome and desired:*

[traveler@riseup.net](mailto:traveler@riseup.net)

well better believe that you've involved in this tragedy and it's your tragedy too. Because you're turned into little soldier boys from the day that you are born and everything that you learn about how to avoid the humanity of women becomes part of the militarism of the country in which you live. It is also part of the economy that you frequently claim to protest. And the problem is that you think it's out there: and it's not out there. It's in you.

What's involved in doing something about all of this? The men's movement seems to stay stuck on two points. The first is that men don't really feel very good about themselves. How could you? The second is that men come to me or to other feminists and say: "What you're saying about men isn't true. It isn't true of me. I don't feel that way. I'm opposed to all of this".

And I say: don't tell me. Tell the warmongers. Tell the rape apologists and the rape celebrationists and the prorape ideologues. Tell the novelists who think rape is wonderful. There's no point telling me. I'm only a woman. There's nothing I can do about it. These men presume to speak for you. They are in the public arena saying that they represent you. If they don't, then you had better let them know. Then there is the private world of misogyny: what you know about each other; what you say in private life; the exploitation that you see in the private sphere; the relationship called love, based on exploitation. It's not enough to find some traveling feminist on the road and go up to her and say: "Gee, I hate it". Say it to your friends who are doing it. And there are streets out there on which you can say these things loud and clear, so as to affect the actual institutions that maintain these abuses.



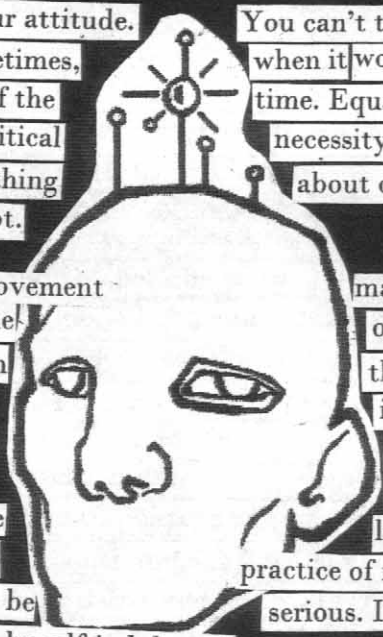
You want to organise men? You don't have to search for issues. The issues are part of the fabric of your everyday lives.

I want to talk to you about equality, what equality is and what it means. Equality is a practice. It is an action. It is a social practice. It is an economic practice. It is a sexual practice. It can't exist in vacuum. You can't have it in your home if, when people leave the home, he is in a world of supremacy based on the existence of his cock she is in a world of humiliation

and degradation because she is perceived to be inferior and because her sexuality is a curse. This is not to say that the attempt to practice equality in the home doesn't matter. It matters, but it is not enough. If you love equality, if you believe in it, if it the way you want to live – not just men and women together in a home, but men and men together in a home and women and women together in a home – if equality is what you want and what you care about, then you have to fight for the institutions that will make it socially real.

It's not just a matter of your attitude. exist. You can't try sometimes, and throw it out the rest of the a way of life. It is a political institutions. And another thing coexist with rape. It cannot.

I want to see this men's movement ending rape because it is the commitment to equality. In we holding onto its preserve of the biological? always going to exist no All our political actions are commitment to ending the has to be political. It has to be It has to be public. It can't be self-indulgent.



You can't think it and make it when it works to your advantage, time. Equality is a discipline. It is necessity to create equality in about quality is that it cannot make a commitment to only meaningful the back of our minds are inevitability as the last Do we think that it is matter what we do? lies if we don't make a practice of rape. This commitment serious. It has to be systematic.

The things the men's movement has wanted are things worth having. Intimacy is worth having. Tenderness is worth having. Cooperation is worth having. A real emotional life is worth having. But you can't have them in a world with rape. Rape stands in the way of each and every one of those things you say you want. And by rape you know what I mean. A judge does not have to walk into this room and say that according to statute such and such these are the elements of proof. We're talking about any kind of coerced sex.

You can't have equality or tenderness or intimacy as long as there is rape, because rape means terror. It means that part of the population live in a state of terror and pretends – to please and pacify you – that it doesn't. So there is no honesty. How can there be? Can you imagine what it is like to live as a woman day in and day out with the threat of rape? Or what it is like to live with the reality? I want

I will honor your choice.  
I hope all is well with you.  
Sincerely,

(Contact information was thusly provided.)

I don't want to sit here and regurgitate a bunch of rhetoric about what patriarchy is and why it sucks. Most people already know and if you don't there is extensive information available on the subject, go find it, read it, ask a womyn (or even another man) about it. I'm sure folks would be happy to load you down with information.

No, this writing is about actually doing something about it. Abusers need to own up to their shit. We shouldn't have to wait for someone to call us out on it. It will likely be easier for both the abuser and the survivor, as well as on our communities, if this is done voluntarily. Most of the things I was taught growing up about "how to be a man" was sexist bullshit, but one thing they told me, own up to your shit instead of hiding or denying like a coward, I happen to agree with (for people of any gender identity).

Unfortunately for many abusers, realizing that wrongdoing has occurred in the first place is the hardest part. If you are a male, and you have had any sort of sexual relationship (particularly prior to



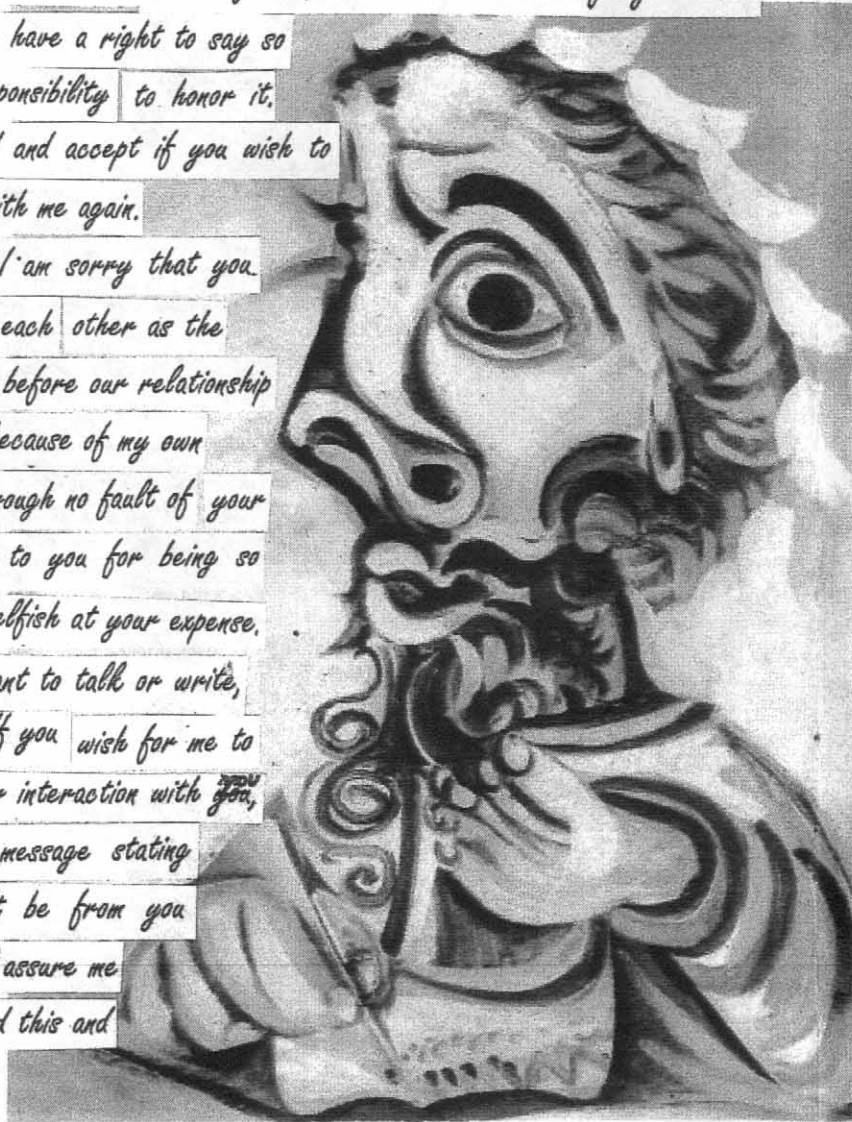


same kind of awareness to others, especially men, so as to hopefully break the cycle of abuse.

If there is anything you want to address to me, whether about things you feel I did wrong but have not mentioned, things you want to say about what I've written, things you want me to know about how I've affected you, or just to say hi, then I am open to your words. If there is anything you feel I must do to address the past or to work on the future, then as a survivor of my violence towards you, you have a right to say so and I have a responsibility to honor it. I also understand and accept if you wish to never interact with me again.

Lastly, I'm sorry that you and I have lost each other as the friends we were before our relationship began. This is because of my own actions and is through no fault of your own. I apologize to you for being so ignorant and selfish at your expense.

If you want to talk or write, please do so. If you wish for me to avoid any further interaction with you, then a simple message stating such (need not be from you personally) will assure me that you received this and



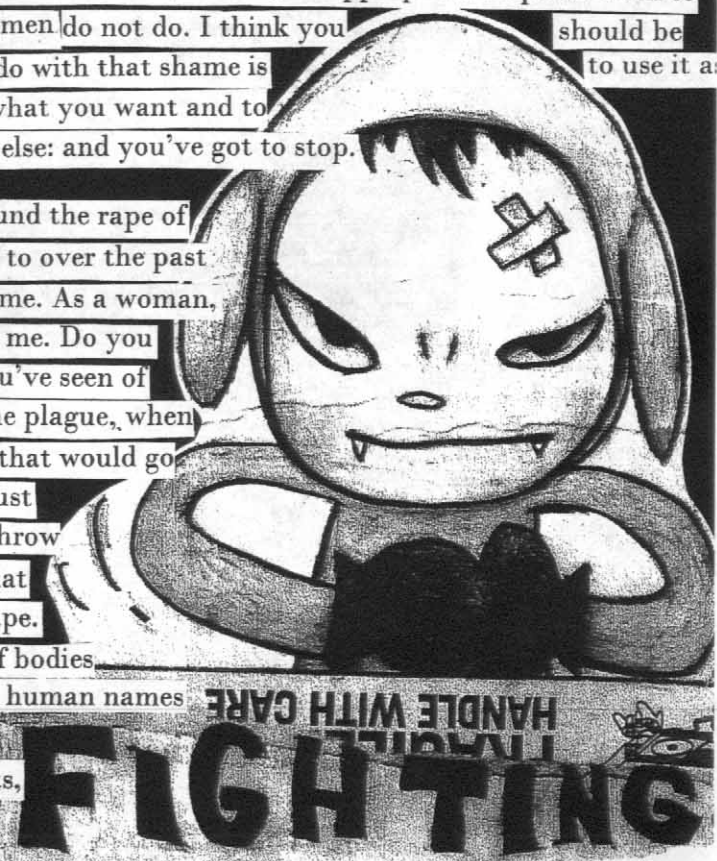
to see you use those legendary bodies and that legendary strength and that legendary courage and the tenderness that you say you have on behalf of women; and that means against the rapists. It means something more than a personal renouncement. It means a systematic, political, active, public attack. And there has been very little of that.

I came here today because I don't believe that rape is inevitable or natural. If I did I would have no reason to be here. If I did, my political practice would be different than it is. Have you ever wondered why we are not just in armed combat against you? It's not because there's a shortage of kitchen knives in this country. It is because we believe in your humanity, against all the evidence. We do not want to do the work of helping you believe in your humanity. We cannot do it anymore. We have always tried. We have been repaid with systematic exploitation and systematic abuse. You are going to have to do this yourselves from now on and you know it.

The shame of men in front of women is, I think, an appropriate response both to what we do do and what men do not do. I think you should be ashamed. But what you do with that shame is to use it as an excuse to keep doing what you want and to keep not doing anything else: and you've got to stop.

As a feminist, I carry around the rape of all the women I've talked to over the past ten years personally with me. As a woman, I carry my own rape with me. Do you remember the pictures you've seen of European cities during the plague, when there were wheelbarrows that would go along and people would just pick up the corpses and throw them in? Well, that is what it's like knowing about rape. Piles and piles and piles of bodies that have whole lives and human names and human faces.

I speak for many feminists, not only myself, when I

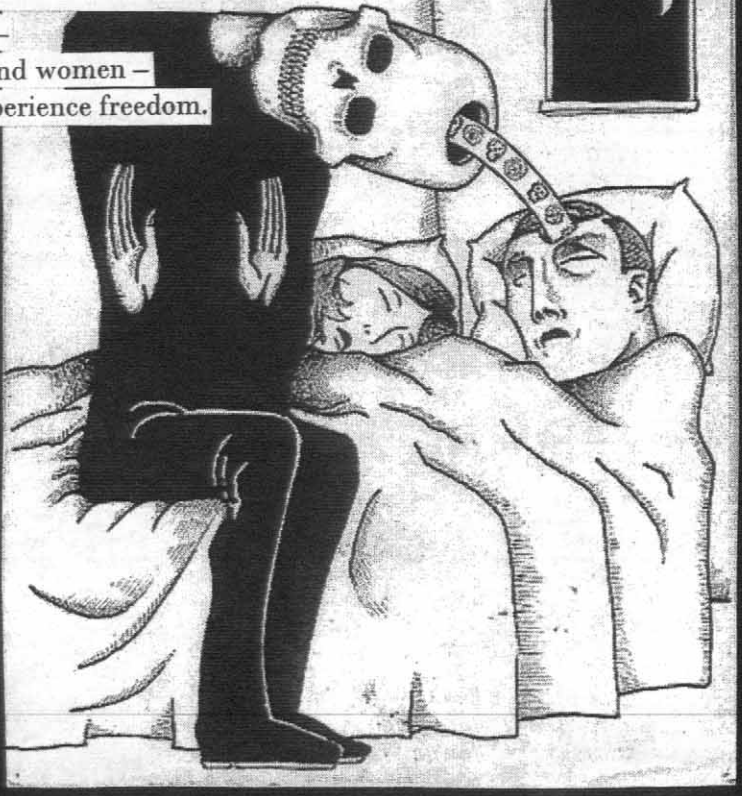


tell you that I'm tired of what I know and sad beyond any words I have about what has already been done to women up to this point, now, up to 2:24pm on this day, here in this place.

And I want one day of respite, one day off, one day in which no new bodies are piled up, one day in which no new agony is added to the old, and I am asking you to give it to me. And how could I ask you for less - it is so little. And how could you offer me anything less: it is so little. Even in wars, there are days of truce. Go and organise a truce. Stop your side for one day. I want a twenty-four-hour truce where there is no rape. I dare you to try it. I demand that you try it. I don't mind begging you to try it. What else could you possibly be here to do? What else could this movement possibly mean? What else could possibly matter so much?

And on that day, that day of truce, that day when not one woman is raped, we will begin with the real practice of equality, because we can't begin it before that day. Before that day it means nothing because it is nothing: it is not real; it is not true. But on that day it becomes real. And then, instead of rape we will for the first time

in our lives -  
both men and women -  
begin to experience freedom.



manipulation and passive-aggressive tactics to keep you from having friends aside from myself.

I remember more than one instance when you tried to explain to me that these things were occurring and about how it was negatively affecting you. I also remember that on each occasion I failed/refused to accept what you said or to respect it. Rather, I acted like a victim and tried to make you feel guilty about it. I never did respect you as an equal... as a partner. Rather, I trivialized your intelligence and placed you on a pedestal, always treating you as my Barbie doll prize. If you had weighed 100 pounds more or had an unattractive face I would likely not have been with you. I did not have any concern for your thoughts or emotions except in terms of what it would say about me as a "man" who



could or could not keep a desirable woman happy or about how it would affect whether or not you would stay with me.

These are things I have come to understand about how I treated you. I am sorry about all of them. Sexual and emotional abuse is wrong. Rape is fucking wrong. I am working on correcting the way I interact with others in my life, learning how to not try to dominate others. I am also working to bring the





I have not interacted with her in about two years, nor do I really expect to do so again. Certain information has been left \_\_\_\_\_ to preserve the anonymity of her/the survivor.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

This note has been much too long in coming. Unfortunately it took me this long to gain the humility and understanding necessary to write this.

I hope that by writing this some good may come to your life that would not have otherwise. I owe you an enormous apology. I am truly sorry. I am sorry that I abused you. I am sorry that I raped you. On oh-so-many occasions I coerced you into having sex with me. On some occasions I believe that I tried to push myself on you so much that you gave in only to get it over with. On some occasions I believe that I tried to push myself on you so much that you were simply too worn out to resist any longer. Several times you clearly stated "No" and I continued to try anyway. I never asked for your consent before touching or kissing you, including of note, the time I came to your house while back from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. I came to your house that night with the sole thought of having sex with you.

While as your partner, I was distrustful of you and used



# GIRL GANGS

While foraging around for info and resources for this issue, I found an old issue of Doris (#21) and in sitting down to re-read it I saw some writing about Girl Gangs. I am so interested to hear stories of consequences and action when it comes to response to sexual assault in our communities. Whenever I hear these stories I'm filled with questions about whether the response worked: did it facilitate change? did it mean the person took responsibility for their action? did it address the anger? did it help to heal? And really, my questions have no answers. But I'm asking them. I feel that in asking them, in knowing about situations and responses that I can ask questions of, gives me (and maybe you too) tools to hang on to, refine, and to use when thinking about and responding to situations in my community. Sometimes we need more than just discussion. Sometimes talking doesn't stop us from being angry and being hurt. Sometimes there needs to be a clear consequence for and response to behaviour that is rape, that is assault, that is totally not ok. I got in contact with Cindy who writes Doris Zine, and here's the info that she shared on her experience of Girl Gangs. But please, check out her writing in issue #21. (Bek)

In the early 1990's in the US there were the girl gangs, not gangs exactly, not really gangs at all, but this real coming together of girls and women to fight sexism and sexual violence by any means necessary. I wasn't a part of any of them, and I'm sure I've romanticized parts and am overcritical of parts, and have parts wrong, but these are some of my impressions. The first one I was around came mainly out of two activist groups in Minneapolis. One group was Anti-Racist Action, which halted a budding White-Power movement in our city. They had various tactics, mainly letting kids who were being recruited into White Power know that they were not welcome in the punk clubs or coffee shops, and that if they were seen, they would be beat up. They didn't really do alot of beating up, but they did do some. The other group was Love and Rage, which was an Anarchist Collective that put out a newspaper, did actions and protests, and was trying to organize a national network. I don't know exactly what happened. I know that Love and Rage came up with a policy of confront sexism and racism wherever they saw it, and that women in ARA were sick of the sexism they had to deal with on a daily level, even in activist scenes.

I remember that they dragged a guy out of a coffee shop who was wearing a really sexist teeshirt and ripped his shirt off. They put up flyers and stickers against rape. They were angry and vocal about sexism within the movement. They ended up focusing a lot on anti-S+M stuff like protesting Suzi Bright (a pro-sex educator). It was during the "sex wars" when feminist were very divided on the issues of pornography and erotic freedom. I wasn't really in the exact same scene as them, but their actions and anger definatly brought a lot of issues to the forefront of conversation in the larger community. People were talking a lot about rape and consent, and about attraction and the way many



people replicate the traditional american ideals of beauty in the way they value "beautiful" people. Things like that. I moved to the West Coast not long after that group started, so I'm not sure exactly what became of it.

In Portland, there was a loose group of girls who were really pissed and pretty creative in their responses. I remember one woman at a party breaking a bottle over a guys head because he was talking to her friend (who was small and had a tiny high voice) like she was stupid. There was a lot of drinking and drugs, a lot of reading the SCUM Manifesto, and some definite essentialist feminist thinking (like anything a woman did was ok). I really loved these women, even though they did a lot of shitty things, they also were just really great. Like they walked around with baseball bats and chased after cars who yelled at them. They confronted guys at partys and at shows. They went out in the world as a group, so they did not have to be as afraid. They were very adamant about women needing to be in groups, and needing to stick up for eachother and get over the petty competition that often keeps women divided. They were a group not to be fucked with. They also talked a lot about body image and past experiences of abuse, and trying to learn about their bodies. They talked a lot about getting revenge on rapists, like they were going to drug some guy and cut off his dreadlocks and tattoo rapist on his forehead, but I don't think they ever did.



I ran into women in California too, who were doing similar things, and also putting out zines and writing songs for bands that were about rape and domestic violence and being afraid to walk around at night, and body hate and self hate and consent and many things that made it so hard to live this life as a woman. There was definitely a feeling that if you were assaulted by someone you knew, there would be women who would stand up for you and who would get revenge for you if that's what you wanted (and maybe even if that wasn't what you wanted). They had no tolerance for rape and assault, and thought that it simply needed to end, and could not be tolerated in the slightest in our community. They understood that ending rape in our community was not the same thing as ending rape in the world, but that it was a starting place, and they were so sick of their friends being raped by their friends.

There was a widening of the definition of rape. At first it was used only when penetration happened, and the definition got widened to include any kind of unwanted sexual contact. Some people had problems with this, but I think it was very important and helped many people finally feel like their experiences of assault counted. And although there was backlash, the girl gangs did make a lot of people realize they had to think more about what they were doing, and whether their sexual advances were coercive or wanted. I do really think that the girl gangs, and the zines and music and general attitudes and the visible anger of many women, changed so much of the way we were able to be in the world at the time. It brought important issues to the forefront and I miss the angry zines and music and gangs. It is still all there. We are still repressing our anger.

We still need to fight like hell.

# Rape, Consent, and

# Patriarchy

We all know what it is,  
now it's time to get off our  
asses and make  
some changes.



To the reader:

What follows is a real letter, which I wrote (and mailed) to an ex-partner. I did this of my own choosing. I was not "called out" on any behavior. I had in fact not interacted with her for several years. Chances are, had I not written this letter I could have

lived 100 years and never had to deal with this issue.

We had been friends in high school. In our adult lives we formed a relationship and lived together for the duration of it, during which I abused and raped her. She eventually ended it, though even at the time I knew that did not happen as soon as she would have liked. (I say "knew" hesitantly here, for I do not want to speak for her.)

Several months later I payed a surprise visit to her home and assaulted her, which is referenced in the letter. A year after that, I tried unsuccessfully to reestablish a friendship with her, by pretending nothing had ever happened. This letter was not another attempt at a friendship but rather an attempt to finally treat her as a human being. At the time of this writing



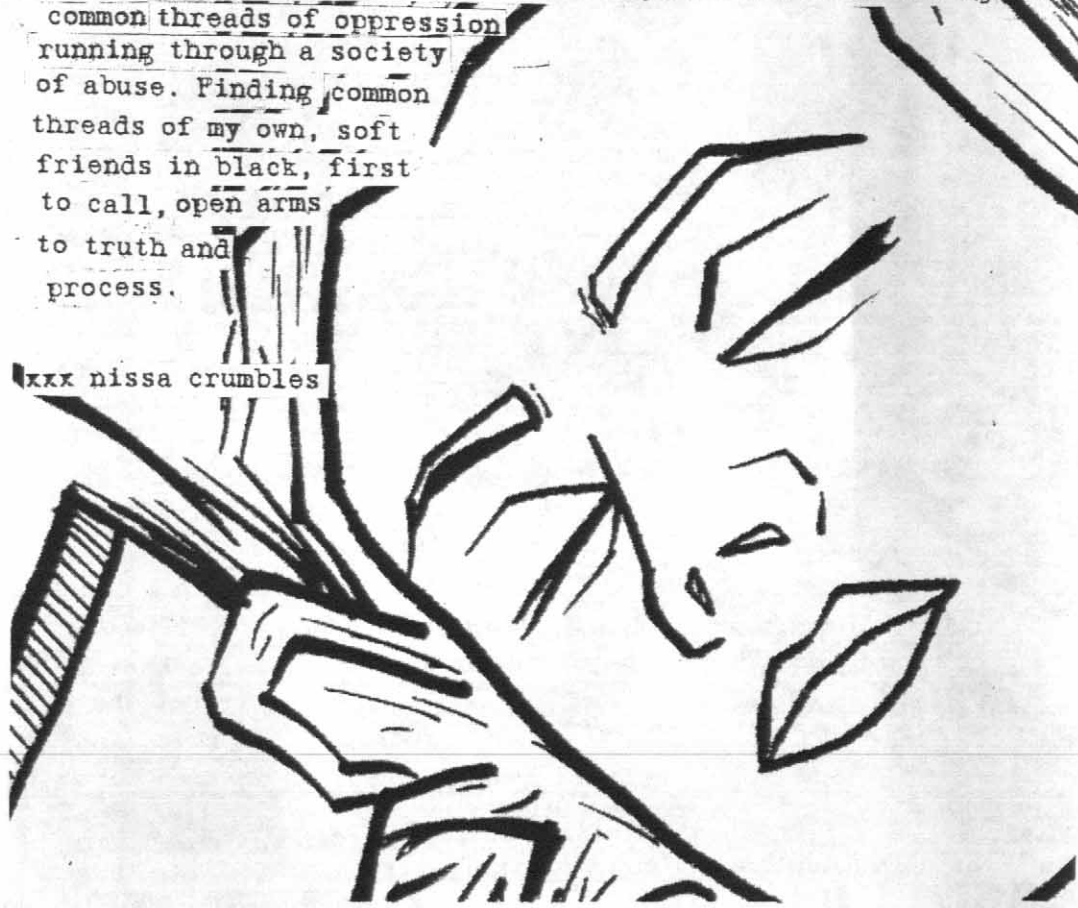
I'm writing my stories in zines, reaching out for support, starting to practice consensual sexual relationships and breaking in the last secrets to family of my blood.

My opening has sparked mixed responses, tears and hostility from those around me. Sorry sister, yes I exposed our deepest pain to strangers without asking you. Mother dearest, no you can't change my story. Daddy, my story is more than good writing, it is real. Brother, when you say you didn't want to know I hope you meant it is a horrible story to hear...

Step. Father. Abuser. I know you didn't want to hurt me, that you wanted to be close to me, that so many of your needs and desires are not met by society, by the family, by your relationships. But this does not change my story. Some silences. Many hugs, some shared stories, only they were grandfathers, or mothers, fathers, boyfriends. Discovering

common threads of oppression running through a society of abuse. Finding common threads of my own, soft friends in black, first to call, open arms to truth and process.

xxx nissa crumbles



all of what seems big can be seen in something smaller.

Last March, I moved back to Dublin after a stint in San Francisco. It's a pretty hard thing to move to somewhere on your own but I'd gotten past that initial hurdle: finding people to hang out with. Through a girl I was going out with I had gotten to know some folks in a newly formed anarchist collective in the centre of the city and spent a few good nights there getting drunk and having a laugh. I was even thinking of asking if they would let me move in, up until an incident with a girl on the last night I went to the house.



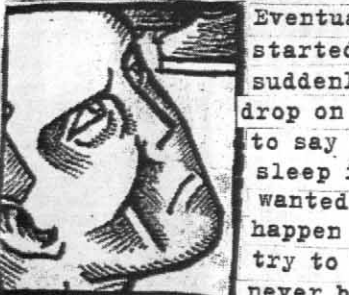
They held group meetings and forums there and I'd been at one that day where I met a load of new people. As the day went on the meeting kind of degenerated into a party, one of those spontaneous things. Anyway, one of the kids I met was this girl Sarah (not her real name). It was the first time she and her friends had visited the collective and we



were all getting to know each other and getting more and more drunk. Myself and Sarah were getting closer, flirting or whatever, and things were going pretty good in general. There was a space of time where Sarah wasn't around, a few of her friends were looking for her but because of the atmosphere there was no real worry, we all thought we were safe in the house.



Eventually Sarah showed up again and the two of us started to kiss. I thought it was strange that she was suddenly so up front, she didn't seem the type to just drop on my knee like she did. As we made out she started to say that she liked me a lot and asked if I would sleep in one of the beds with her. I'm not saying she wanted to have sex but there was a chance it could happen and she was really drunk by this stage. I always try to be fairly aware if a girl is vulnerable, I've never been down with the whole "few drinks and



things'll loosen up" mentality because I've done too much stupid shit that I've regretted the next morning (I only ever hurt myself though). As this was happening one of the residents of the house, Brian, was looking at me from the



kitchen. He kept shaking his head. Sarah went to the toilet at one point and I walked over to Brian. He said "Dude, she's pretty drunk, you shouldn't mess around with her." I agreed and asked what I should do. I didn't want to hurt her feelings but I'm not into messing around with someone so drunk and he said that she was probably going to fall asleep soon anyway so if I just got her to lie down it would be cool. A good friend of Sarah's was there too and I asked him if he would take her to bed and I would just go sleep on a couch in another room. He said yes and I went off to sleep.

The couch I slept on was in a pretty busy section of the house so when I woke up there were people floating about. Sarah was sitting at the end of the couch, looking hungover like everyone else. I asked where she had slept and she said she hadn't, she had just sat up for the rest of the night with her friend. Sarah then said she was waiting for her mam to pick her up. I laughed at the image of someone's mam picking them up from a squat with punks and crusty's sleeping all over the place but she only smiled briefly. Her mam got there a few minutes later and they left with Sarah still pale and quiet. I said goodbye but she just gave me a quick nod and left. I thought she was pissed because I had just disappeared earlier.

About a week later at another forum one of Sarah's friends brought up the issue of an assault at the party. They didn't say her name but from being there and hearing the descriptions it was pretty obvious that it was Sarah who made the accusation. It turns out that in the period when Sarah had disappeared she had been upstairs lying on a bed. She was a bit too drunk and trying to get her head back together. Brian, the resident, had approached her while she was incapacitated and forced intercourse. Sarah didn't defend herself or shout out because she was just too drunk to coordinate. I got talking to her friend and he told me this had happened before. I made out with her because she spent the rest of the night with me or him. It was then that I realised that Sarah hadn't been propositioning me, she had been scared to sleep alone. So why was Brian telling me to take it easy because she was so drunk? Was it guilt, fear of discovery or because he wanted to assault her again? A discussion ensued, revolving around whether or not to out and out attack Brian for what he had done. People who knew Brian better than the rest of us talked about his domineering character and tendency to proposition girls at party's quite a bit, there was never any doubt expressed that he was capable. Even the next morning, when I had been sitting in the house with the residents, Brian had his arm around and lips all over this other girl who had been there the night before too. It was obvious something had happened but the girl had been pretty drunk, just like everyone, and didn't seem into his advances the next day. In the end one of Sarah's friends talked to her and told us that she didn't want a big deal made out of the whole thing. I never got to

## Stories blossom on rainy days.

Sexual abuse. Incest. Silence. That awkward stare. We don't know how to talk about that. That doesn't get brought up around here. Well, maybe that's how it was, but things have got to change.

Spontaneous moments catch up with me, later. A forum examining sexism, racism, homophobia in our 'movement' and there's a buzzing inside me, I know I have to speak, the hand goes up and with silent trust I know that when I get passed the microphone the words will flow. In a shaky test of radical trust I speak; 'I want to add another 'ism' to this forum, alcoholism. And say how hard it is for a womyn who has been sexually abused by drunk males to be around aggressive intoxicated people'. Some tears now.



Beginnings are moulded by what has been before. Before those microphone moments I would tell abuse stories, I would talk about survival and pain, truth and silence. After microphone moments I want to talk about breaking silences and cycles of abuse and explore community responses to sexual assault.

Vulnerability is strength. Hello world, these are my deepest fears and pains. Examine my scars. These tears, my own. These needs, longings and desires, mine. And suddenly there are sparks and I'm walking around in a daze awake to people responding to me. Hugs, stares, awkward moments galore. A secret that cut me deep exposed to the skin. And relief. I can be real, be me. No more pretending. Deep sleep.

That was a few months ago now. Suddenly life has sped up, and



Rape is one place where the infrastructure of male dominance comes very close to the surface and can be seen for what it is. Rape follows from a cultural pattern of conditioning and education that guarantees that there will always be a

'top' and a 'bottom', a 'buyer' and a 'bought'. By rooting out rape and rape supportive behaviours we are undermining the very

foundations of the patriarchal world order. This understanding, above all else, energized us and compels us to act.

Reaching into the lives of men with these profound

questions, and loving and respecting these men enough to struggle with their answers in the context of their own lives,

is one of the most powerful and important ways to reveal the lies of our distant fathers. We offer men support for daring to make changes

in a patriarchal world that resists change and offers continuous reinforcement for

rape-supportive and self-destructive behaviours.

Our experience and the testimony of many of the men

we have worked with is that men though anxious and often full of rape mythology and feelings of guilt can and do change their attitudes and behaviours. When approached

with compassion, friendship, honesty and feminist clarity, men of varied ethnic, class and racial backgrounds can be invited to take a look at how the lies they've been taught are hurting them and others. They accept our unexpected, but long-awaited invitation to stop raping. Men are unlearning rape.

see Sarah again but her friends told me she didn't want a lot of people to know about it, just wanted to forget. I never said anything because I didn't want to disrespect her wishes but on a few occasions where I would run into someone from the house I felt an urge to let them know. It wasn't for gossip or anything I just felt that in a house where so many people lived so close together and when there were also a lot of drifters passing through to have someone there capable of assaulting a girl without anyone else knowing was wrong. In the end I never brought it up, something I regret terribly.

With this guy's large personality he had been one of the most vocal in the house, especially in regard to ethics and behaviour. I remember one morning him chastising some folks for doing hard drugs, saying it was against the sentiments that the house was based on and calling something an anarchist collective wasn't a euphemism for drug den. Now, while you could say that even through his chastising he was over-stepping the anarchist ethos of being free to behave how you feel fit as long as you don't hurt anyone, it was understandable as this house was newly set up and could very easily have degenerated into a party house for punks if they weren't strict in the initial about trying to achieve something. At the same time what is more contradictory to anarchist philosophy than forcing yourself on a drunken girl? A girl who thought it was safe to crash out in the house because they were trying to establish an open, cooperative vibe where everyone's wishes were respected. There had been no more Class-A benders since Brian made his point regarding that so wasn't this respectful of his wishes? It was probably more to do with an "I'm an original in the house" mindset than respect for people in general, therefore allowing him to issue ultimatums that the newer residents had to abide by. There again is a notion of seniority that contradicts the ethos, just like (but no where near as bad) as the assumption that it's a party, people go wild and it's cool to force sex on a girl who's passed out in his house. HIS house. HIS rights. While I do believe that men can understand the emotional and mental damage inflicted on female victims of sexual assault, I don't think they can truly relate (unless having undergone an assault of some kind themselves and assaults on guys are a lot less frequent). I don't want to make generalised assumptions but it would seem that other women could relate more easily due to the attitudes portrayed towards their positions in society. I would hope it especially possible for female members of the punk or radical communities to empathise because they make it a fundamental part of their identity to be aware of such discriminations and abuses in society. It's too often the case, though, that men talk of equality in voices so loud that women can't be heard. Plus there's the unfortunate contradiction of living a life unrestrained by others rules or impositions and yet not wanting to deal



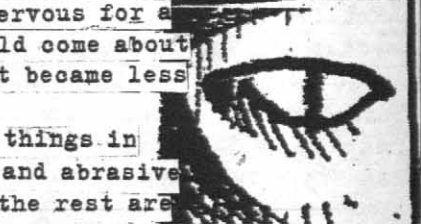
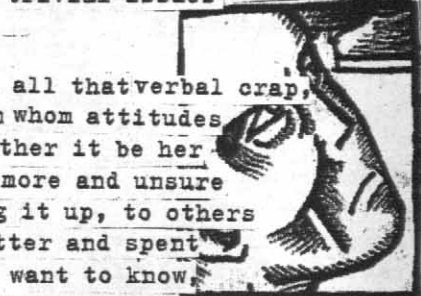
with other's being imposed upon because it means your own attempts to achieve some kind of freedom are interrupted.

By the time I left America the house was on its way to being redeveloped so the residents were all getting ready to leave. Brian was still there. From the attitudes of the others it didn't look as though anyone knew. As

far as I could tell the only reaction from Sarah's friends was to refuse to attend forums or parties held in the house anymore. The whole issue was allowed to stagnate and be forgotten. While I understand that Sarah wanted to forget and move on, somewhere along the way it has to be remembered that as a declared counter culture trying to exist outside of the status quo we have to take care of each other and try to make sure that people who are hurt are taken care of and that there's less chance of others being hurt in the future. I know that I could have done more and I have a whole bag of handy excuses to use but they're all bullshit, I was just as complacent as the rest. I just as readily allowed my own trivial issues to get in the way of this one.

But forgetting about anarchy and ethos and all that verbal crap, the worst part of it all is that the person whom attitudes changed toward most was probably Sarah. Whether it be her close friends who feel guilty of not doing more and unsure of how to comfort her, to let it be or bring it up, to others who heard rumours yet didn't pursue the matter and spent more time avoiding her because they didn't want to know, didn't want to address something heavy, to Sarah herself. I can't even fathom what kind of effect an experience like that has on how you view yourself, from the feel of your body to your mental well being. And who remains the most blissfully unaware? Brian, who's behaviour didn't change and who made no attempt to rectify what he had done. He was probably nervous for a few weeks that some kind of retaliation would come about and then dutifully forgot about things as it became less likely.

It's a microcosmic example of the way most things in society work. The loudest, most masculine and abrasive will get away with what they want because the rest are too sheepish to stand up. They shout out grand declarations, always the first to condemn others misdeeds while being likely to commit the foulest ones themselves. Even inside collectives or efforts to fight



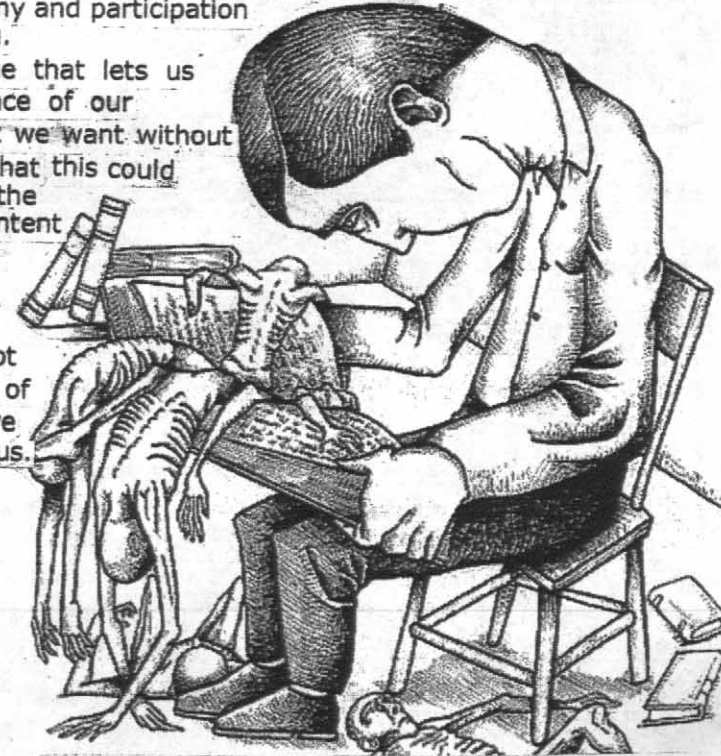
So why do we ask about kissing? The reason is, if I don't believe that I need to ask whether I may kiss or hold hands, then why would I think to get verbal consent for intercourse or any other intimate sexual contact? Essentially we are saying that consent is a continual process by which partners each explicitly agree and give permission, without coercion or threat of coercion is necessary and right in even the smallest act.

The need for consent is not measured by the type or degree of contact proposed. Its value is absolute, and its absence particularly where a history of trust has not been established and tested over time introduces an unnecessary and unacceptable risk for sexual assault.

The idea of establishing consent often sounds like a joke to men at first, but it is an idea that catches on quickly once we put to rest apprehensions that sex with consent can't be 'romantic' and 'spontaneous'.

Our message is clear: sex without verbal consent is more likely to be rape. Even if we can 'get away with it', even if the victim has not identified it as rape, even if she or he did not experience it as rape, consent was not established and its absence makes rape a definite possibility. The key is whether the freedom to choose is always present, whether choosing to change one's mind or to stop at any point. Having this choice represents our mutual right to feel safe and marks the absence of rape. It is a process that continually recognizes each person's autonomy and participation in the decision-making.

Consent is the bridge that lets us move from acceptance of our prerogative to get what we want without asking and our denial that this could constitute to rape to the understanding that our intent does not invalidate another's feelings of having being raped; that our denial does not undo rape; and our lack of awareness of what we've done does not exculpate us.





The idea is to move from viewing rape as an isolated act to it's being a part of a broad spectrum of behaviours and attitudes that involve all men one way or another. This "rape spectrum" includes innuendo, rape 'jokes', objectification, emotional withdrawal, sexual harassment, rape imagery in pornography, gay-hate, violent metaphors in speech and hatred of women. These are places where each man can act to end his support of sexualized violence.

We find that in adopting these processes, the men become curious about new ways of being with women and men without needing to control them. This means rediscovering their feelings, communicating their feelings in non-hurtful ways, and expanding their understanding of intimacy and affection neither of which necessarily have anything to do with sex.

There are bitter (sometimes bittersweet) ironies in doing this work. The we feel most intensely every time we leave a particularly invigorating workshop is that at some level we have been invited in and listened to because we are not women. Men are not used to listening to women in the same way we listen to men. Most of the men we talk with barely know how to listen to and hear anyone other than themselves. Rape is one measure of how poorly men listen to women.

It is crucial to avoid separating from the men with whom we are talking. We, like they, know the right words, ideas and "moves" of patriarchal sex, all the sounds of "power-over." We are definitely not the 'good guys' and they the 'bad'. We are no different from them, and no better. This is hard to remember.

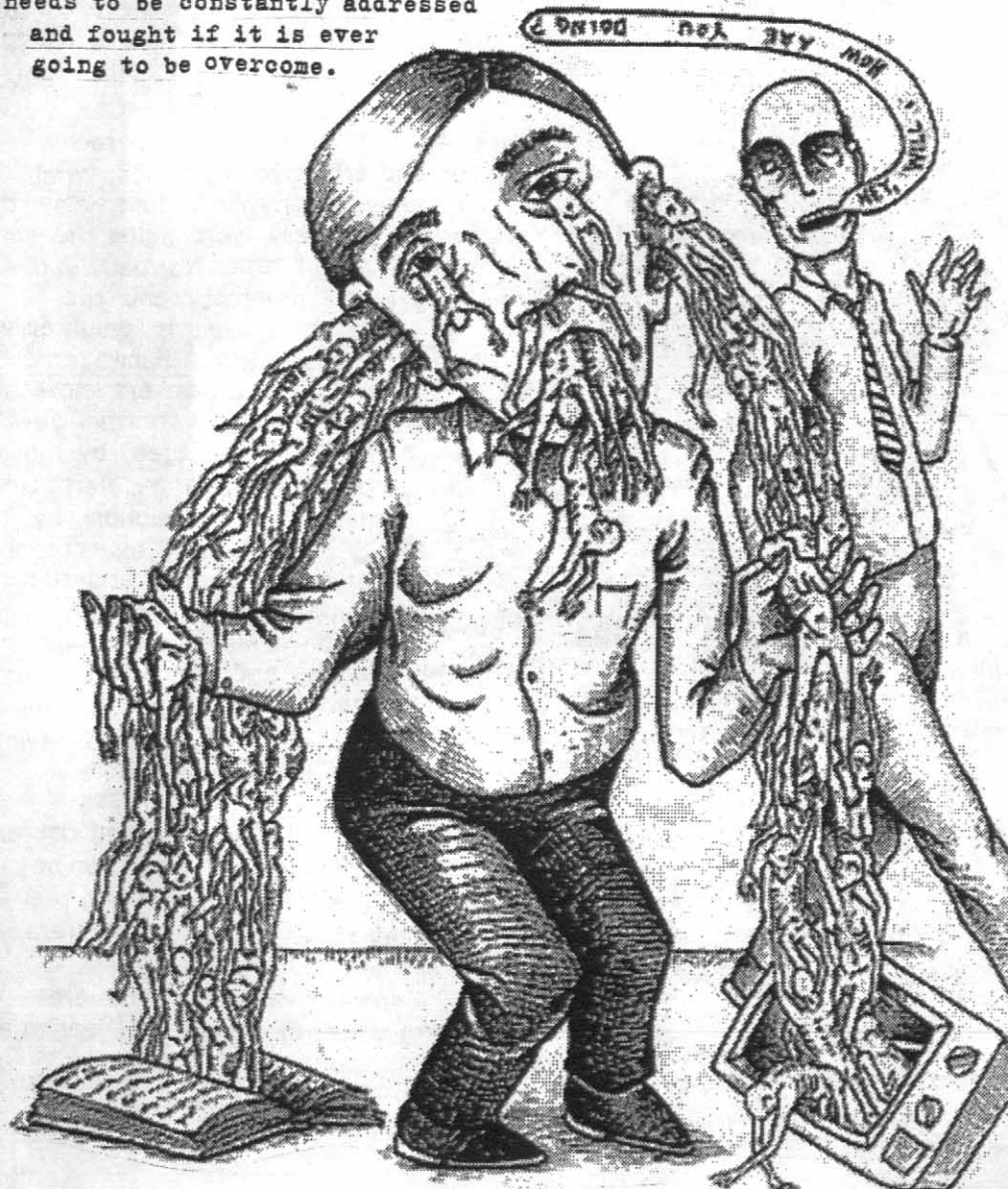
We experience turmoil over how best to reveal the connections between men's violence against women and their homophobia (their violence against any men they perceive to be "like women"). We are hurt by the heterosexist bias that underlies so many of the men's words. The question we face in every workshop is not only how to handle this hurt, but also when to challenge these biases and how to do so in ways that let us feel safe and that continue to invite participation. We know that some men are so entrenched in their homophobia that they will use their perception of our gayness as an excuse for not getting involved in the discussion.

We know, too, that gay and bisexual men are present in every group, often silenced by the very threats and fears that support rape. Anti-gay violence is so rampant in this country that we must ask if it's even possible to invite men's participation without putting them at risk for physical and emotional abuse after we've gone. The question we face is not theoretical, but practical: how to challenge gay-hate most effectively without inviting men to tune us out? One way is to routinely broaden our language and analysis to include heterosexual and homosexual experiences. Though these are difficult questions for us, the issue itself unifies us and is one around which in theory and practice we share great solidarity.



established methods the patterns repeat themselves in subversive ways. Social hierarchies are formed and all the grand revolutionary talk becomes completely null when people like Sarah are hurt so deeply, then forgotten about

through a reluctance to actually address the issue at hand. It tears open our (male) illusions of achievement and exposes that underneath the rhetoric we are still filled with ingrained prejudice that needs to be constantly addressed and fought if it is ever going to be overcome.



## MEN UNLEARNING RAPE

These ideas and information were taken from a zine called "Men Unlearning Rape", put together by Joe Weinberg and the late Michael Biernbaum. The zine explores issues and conclusions drawn from the group "Men Stopping Rape" and the countless workshops they have run in fraternities, residence halls, high schools, with men working in the community and young men coming out of prison and entering the military.

Let's begin where we often start our workshops, with the question "How do you know when your friend wants to kiss on a date?" Here are some of the answers: "It's in her eyes... She leans towards me and I lean towards her... I just grab her hand... It's in the air... I just know... It's like waves... She laughs at my jokes... You can never know for sure, you just gotta make the move... It just happens... A feeling of electricity... A relaxed mood... Her eyes are closed... Body language."

These same answers come from men of different racial, class, religious and ethnic backgrounds. What they have in common is just below the surface of these words, lies the same ideology of rape. Normally hidden, here the mentality and the moment of rape is voluntarily revealed without hesitation or deceit. These answers show the extent to which "normal guys", trained (encouraged) by movies and advertising, by vernacular language and metaphor, by the demands and expectations of family, friends and cultural traditions, have raised body language, non-verbal cues and assumptions to a fine and deadly art. They are excuses or rationalizations for acting without much (or any) information that let him avoid having to ask the most immediately useful question, "May I?" or "Would you like to?" Rather than ask a question he is not used to asking of equals, and risk an answer he may neither wish to hear nor be prepared to accept, each of these young men is choosing as we admit we did to act unilaterally, without corroboration and without expressed consent. These sorts of rationalizations are fabricated out of the stuff of myth (a "real" man knows everything about sex without asking), privilege (it's a man's right to do so and I'm going to) and self deception (she wants it and I can get away with it).

In running these kinds of workshops, our being there is an example and model for men, demonstrating that ending sexist violence is an appropriate activity for men, one that does not "betray" other men and our manhood.

It is our experience that when we men talk far more honestly when no women are present. There is less distortion of our words when we cannot "play" to women (i.e. please, placate or seduce them). The language and revelations are more brutally frank, but no women are present to be further hurt or victimized by it. We can best deal with the pain, anger, grief within an all-male context. Hilarity, too, we share when trust lets nervous laughter give way to the humor of our often absurd masculine training.

Our strategy is to work to create a space where men feel safe to talk and participate. We start with their beliefs, not ours. We listen carefully, with curiosity and without immediate judgment. The men invariably stop talking if we start with expositions about patriarchy and privilege, or lectures about what they should be doing. Scolding them as enemies of women, blaming them for rape may satisfy our anger and frustration but will fail to engage them. After all, most of these men (and even go as far to say, most people in general) believe what they know is right and none of their [dating/relationship] behaviors are problematic or suspect.

This is difficult because we acknowledge our anger at men who deny their complicity in rape and who continue to act from positions of privilege and dominance, often brutality.

We refuse to rescue the man from himself or the boy-child within with a false cloak of innocence. Instead the way we honor his integrity is by accepting his responsibility for who he is. We are asking each man to join in the same process that we are involved in: accepting responsibility for what he's done and coming to recognize that he has raped whether he says "coerced" or speaks more euphemistically of "not being proud of what I've done."

Most men we talk to will tell us that they want to "do something about rape", meaning: something about other men who rape. The process we initiate and support is inward-directed: confronting the rapist within, understanding his complicity in the rape culture, and learning how to be a man without rape. We defer until later the outward-directed process of learning how to confront rape-supportive behaviours in others and to safely intervene to stop the violence of others.

We are making the distinction between internal and external realms of focus. That though they are separate, they can inextricably linked, and can be addressed in parallel or one after the other.