Myths about rape

Date: 2020-09-03

Source: https://thenationonlineng.net/myths-about-rape/

Myths about rape  
  
By Elizabeth Fadeyi  
  
From Vera Omozuwa to Barakat Bello to Grace Oshiagwu to Azeezat Somuyiwa, the list of rape victims seems endless and the crime refuses to abate. Almost on a daily basis, we read in the dailies how young girls and women continue to suffer unjust sexual molestation.  
  
Rapists have all sorts of excuse and justification for their act, critically looking at the three rape cases that happened in Ibadan some months back. It is glaring that the acclaimed myths towards rape are untrue.  
  
Barakat Bello and two other victims were not reported to have dressed in a seductive way that could have attracted them to be raped. So, the fact that women provoke men to rape them by wearing revealing clothes or flirting is untrue. It doesn’t matter what a woman wears or how she behaves. A woman is never responsible for being raped but the rapist who doesn’t seek her consent for sex.  
  
There are myths surrounding rape. One of them is that women shouldn’t go out alone at night as they are likely to get raped. How true is this? Only one in 10 of rape cases is committed by strangers. The rest are committed by someone close to the victims. People are often raped in their homes, environment. Judging from the three cases that happened at Akinyele Local Government Area of Ibadan, it is puzzling that the victims could get raped even in their abode.  
  
There is also this myth that “it is only rape, the victim should put up a fight and also resist”. There are many reasons a victim of sexual assault would not fight or resist her attacker. She resisting or trying to fight back will only provoke her attacker the more and it will result to more severe injuries, the victim might be too shocked to do anything.  
  
Not all rape survivors will be bruised. Many rape survivors are not visibly injured. The threat of violence alone is often enough cause for a woman to submit to the rapist, to protect herself from harm.  
  
People react to crisis in different ways. Victims of sexual violence exhibit a spectrum of responses to the assault which can include: calm, hysteria, withdrawal, anger, apathy, denial, and shock. Being sexually assaulted is a very traumatic experience.  
  
Reactions to the assault and the length of time needed to process through the experience vary with each person. There is no “right way” to react to being sexually assaulted. Assumptions about a way a victim “should act” may be detrimental to the victim because victims cope with trauma in different ways which can also vary over time.  
  
“If a person goes to someone’s room, house, or goes to a bar, he/she assumes the risk of sexual assault. If something happens later, he/she can’t claim that he/she was raped or sexually assaulted because he/she should have known not to go to those places.”  
  
This “assumption of risk”wrongfully places the responsibility of the offender’s actions with the victim. Even if a person went voluntarily to someone’s residence or room and consented to engage in some sexual activity, it does not serve as blanket consent for all sexual activity. If a person is unsure about whether the other person is comfortable with an elevated level of sexual activity, the person should stop and ask.  
  
When someone says “No” or “Stop”, that means STOP. Sexual activity forced upon another without consent is sexual assault.  
  
“It’s not sexual assault if it happens after drinking or taking hard drugs.” Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs is not an invitation for non-consensual sexual activity. A person under the influence of drugs or alcohol does not cause others to assault him/her; others choose to take advantage of the situation and sexually assault him/her because he/she is in a vulnerable position.  
  
“All sexual assault victims will report the crime immediately to the police. If they do not report it or delay in reporting it, then they must have changed their minds after it happened, wanted revenge, or didn’t want to look like they were sexually active.” There are many reasons a sexual assault victim may not report the assault to the police. It is not easy to talk about being sexually assaulted, then the experience of re-telling what happened may cause the person to relive the trauma which is quite excruciating.