

## Milestones of Development?

Ben Warwick

The recent change by the FBI to include male rape when gathering statistics is a milestone- whether a milestone on our progression as a civilised society or a marker of ignorance is however up for debate.

The observer of such news can come to a number of conclusions;

- that the problem of male rape is a new one;
- that the problem of male rape is only big enough now to warrant attention;
- simply that no one realised that the rules (and laws) were out of date;
- that it 'isn't as big a deal' for men as for women; or that men can't be raped;
- it has been a very serious problem for quite some time, but it hasn't been politically expedient to do anything about it until now.

These observations display various levels of ignorance, trust and optimism. The final one is my own. The various views show a somewhat callous disregard for human life and human welfare. To answer the conclusions in order; this is not a new problem; that even if there was only one man raped per year it is still a 'big enough' problem to warrant attention; of course the US government have known that there is a problem (they know pretty near everything that goes on inside their borders (and beyond)).

Which leaves the final two options as being the real reason that this change is only being seen now. The US don't see male rape as a 'big deal' or that they do and weren't prepared to risk political capital to address it. Neither covers the 'brilliant free nation' of the USA in glory.

Political expediency can be seen through this example and others to be a flawed method of reform, so what other means do we have for pressing for change? The media? Religion? Civil society?

Human rights principles? The answer for each individual will probably differ. For my part I despair of two in that list, and keep faith in society because of the other two. The true answer is probably that a combination of these elements, sitting alongside our political institutions provides the impetus for change; and the hope that the milestones reached are ones to celebrate.

One could be forgiven for thinking that headlines such as, 'US expands definition of rape to include men' (The Guardian) mean that there has been a change in the law. In fact the law still remains to be changed in all but a few states. This 'change' refers only to government statistic collection and the resulting budget allocations. The law continues to ignore suffering like this, creating milestones of ignorance only to be ashamed of.