

Voices Against Sexual Assault



MONTHLY UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2011

A Pedagogical Shift: From “DON’T GET RAPED” to “DON’T RAPE”

Don't get raped. While most people do not walk around with that exact concern in their head, many students—especially young women—have thought about it at one time or another.

Don't get raped. This is not exactly what sexual assault prevention educators set out to teach in classrooms, seminars and workshops across the country, but isn't it something that comes up in every discussion?

Don't get raped. But how?

This question is particularly salient now, as institutions of higher learning across the country throw open their doors to welcome incoming freshmen, returning upperclassmen, transfer students, graduate students and international students. As communities swell with college students, who inevitably bring the rowdy lifestyle and problems that are notoriously associated with the college years, safety can become a real issue.

While colleges and universities employ specialized safety programming and parents counsel students on appropriate behavior, we have to ask ourselves if our current pedagogical approach to sexual assault prevention education is as effective as possible if our goal is to eliminate sexual assault from our college campuses and communities.

While most college students will not admit to contemplating how to not get raped, many of them think about it without realizing it. Ask most college students what they do to prevent sexual assault from happening, and most—especially the young women—will give you a laundry list of risk reduction (or “DON’T GET RAPED”) techniques such as:

- Don't go out alone or with people you don't know.
- Don't accept drinks (even non-alcoholic ones) from strangers and always make sure to watch your drink
- Never leave a friend alone at a party
- Watch what you wear and how you act

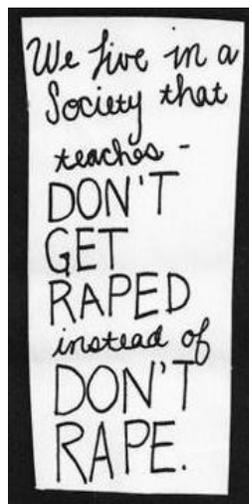
What these well learned lessons tell us is that we have

Next Meeting

Thursday, October 13th @ 4PM
YWCA Kalamazoo

VOICES meets regularly at the YWCA of Kalamazoo on the SECOND Thursday of the month at 4PM. Please RSVP to info@voicesasa.org to join us!

done well in teaching students how to reduce their personal risk, without addressing the underlying cause of why sexual assault is such a pervasive issue in our culture. To address this issue, we must answer the age old question:



Why do we live in a society that teaches DON’T GET RAPED instead of DON’T RAPE?

This very question is addressed in a satirical blog posted by the Men’s Anti-Violence Council, which focuses on the issue of men’s violence against women. The blog points out that:

“Risk reduction and rape prevention workshops are pretty popular...Some of the techniques may reduce risk. However, if a rapist discovers that one woman has reduced her risk, they can just move on to the next woman. The problem isn't solved, just redirected” (Men’s Anti-Violence Council, 2009).

The popular blog goes on to suggest a list of fool-proof ways to end sexual assault, including (but not limited to):

- If a woman is drunk, don't rape her.
- If a woman is completely conscious, don't rape her.
- If a woman does not give consent, don't rape her.
- If a woman is walking alone at night, don't rape her.

While satirical, this blog brings up an important point about an much needed shift in our pedagogical approaches. Our current pedagogical approach to sexual assault prevention education is balanced somewhere between *don't get raped* and *don't rape*. The question remains: how do we become a society that teaches DON’T RAPE instead of DON’T GET RAPED?

