

MYTH: WHITE MEN RAPE BLACK WOMEN AND BLACK MEN RAPE WHITE WOMEN

Implications:

Entrenches racial and class prejudices

Facts:

Statistic from the SA Police Services shows that most rapes occur within the rapists own community

Men from all races and ethnic group rape women from their own race and those from other races or ethnic group.

MYTH: HUSBAND CANNOT RAPE THEIR OWN WIVES

Implications:

Assumes that marriage means perpetual consent.

It nullifies an offence of marital rape.

Disempowers married women from lodging a case of marital rape.

Facts:

It is still rape if the woman does not consent, no matter what her relationship with the man is

The Domestic Violence Act of 1998 makes rape in marriage illegal throughout South Africa., “marital rape”.

MYTH: WOMEN LIBERATION CAUSES OR INCREASES INCIDENTS OF RAPE

Implications:

Encourage fear to empowered and liberated women.

Reinforces negative attitudes towards women

Justifies the oppression of women

Assumes that men are not concerned with societal oppression of women

Facts:

The women movement have spread awareness about rape in society and has empowered more women to report and cope with rape and is definitely not responsible for the increase in rate of rape.

Only the rapist are responsible for rape.

MYTH: ONLY GAY MEN GET RAPED / ONLY GAY MEN RAPE MEN

Implications:

Reinforce homophobic fears and prejudices

Create the illusion of the safety for heterosexual men

Re-traumatizes and stigmatizes male survivors

Result in few reported cases of raped men.

Facts:

Men of all sexual orientation get raped

Men who rape other men are often heterosexuals and they usually have a relationship with a woman

Rapists rape other men as part of their violence and need for power, dominance and control over other men.

MYTH: PROSTITUTES OR SEX WORKERS CANNOT BE RAPED

Implications:

It implies that sex workers always consent to any form of sex.

Undermine sex workers' right to live free from violence

Provide an excuse for abuse to sex workers.

Facts:

Sex workers have the same rights with regards to consent as everyone. The transaction they negotiate with clients are for consensual activities not to be rape.

RAPE: MYTHS & MISCONCEPTIONS

WHAT IS A “MYTH”

A “MYTH” is a commonly held belief, idea or explanation that is not true. It arises from people's need to make sense of an act that is senseless, violent or disturbing. They attempt to explain horrible events like abuse and rape in ways that fit with preconceived notions about the world. They arise from and reinforce our prejudice and stereotype. Myths have powerful “implications” and assumptions for how we look at the world. In this pamphlet we present some of the common myth about rape, their implications and then provide the facts which present the truth.

MYTH: RAPE OCCURS BETWEEN STRANGERS IN DARK ALLEYS

Implications:

Implies that home is safe from rape.

Implies that rape can be prevented by avoiding certain places and therefore blames the survivor

Assumes a particular survivor profile and therefore stigmatizes her

Entrenches racial and class prejudices



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE,
CONTACT US ON

Web address : www.powa.co.za
Email address info@powa.co.za
legal@powa.co.za

Telephone (011) 642 4345/6
Fax (011) 484 3195

Facts:

More than half of all rapes are committed by persons known to their survivor
Date or acquaintances rape is very common
Women are often raped in their homes

MYTH: WOMEN PROVOKE RAPE BY THE WAY THEY DRESS OR ACT**Implications:**

Attempt to excuse rape and “blame” the victims
Assumes that a woman attracts attention, either due to the way she acts or dresses is looking for sex or deserve what she gets
Re-victimizes and stigmatizes the survivor

Facts:

Dressing attractively and flirting is an invitation for attention and/or admiration not for rape
Only the rapist is responsible for the rape

MYTH: WOMEN SECRETLY WANT TO BE RAPED**Implications:**

Attempt to excuse rape and blame the survivor
Reinforces stereotypes of passive female receptiveness to male sexual aggression
Re-victimizes and stigmatizes the survivor

Facts:

A woman might fantasize about being overwhelmed or overpowered sexually (with a safe environment), but that does not mean she wants to be raped in reality. Many people fantasize about things they do not actually want to experience. It is important to remember that a woman in complete control of her fantasies. She is NOT in complete control in a rape situation.

MYTH: WOMEN WHO DRINK ALCOHOL OR USE DRUGS ARE ASKING TO BE RAPED**Implications:**

Attempt to excuse rape and blame the victim
Re-victimizes and stigmatizes the survivor

Facts:

Women have the same right to use substances as men do
If a woman is unable to give consent because she is drunk, drugged or unconscious, it is rape
Only the rapist is responsible for the rape

MYTH: RAPE IS A CRIME OF PASSION**Implications:**

Assumes that the rape is impulsive and unplanned
Assume men to be incapable of delaying gratification or controlling sexual urges

Assume that the rape is about uncontrollable lust
Attempts to excuse, minimize and romanticize rape
Assumes that only attractive women get raped
Disregards elements of power aggression, violence, control and humiliation in rape
Attempt to remove the responsibility for rape from the rapist

Facts:

Research and evidence from rapists themselves suggest that most rape are premeditated and planned
Many rapists fail to get an erection or ejaculation
Interviews with rapists reveal that they rape to feel powerful and in control, not for sexual pleasure
Stereotypical unattractive women are raped, including the elderly and babies
Many rapists are involved in sexually satisfying relationships with wives or girlfriends at the time of the rape.

MYTH: MANY RAPISTS ARE INSANE**Implications:**

Attempt to excuse the crime of the rape
Disregards the social context of gender inequality
Assumes a recognizable profile of a rapist and thus blames the survivor for the rape

Facts:

Research shows that only 5% can be classified criminally insane
In a study done in US campus, 60% of male participants indicated that they may rape a woman if they knew they would not get caught
Rapists can rarely be distinguished from other men.

IF SHE DIDN'T SCREAM, FIGHT OR GET INJURED SHE WASN'T RAPED**Implications:**

Disbelieves and re-traumatizes the survivor
Invalidate her experiences
Discourage her from seeking help

Facts:

Women in rape situations are legitimately afraid of being killed or seriously injured and so co-operate with the rapist
Rapist used many manipulative techniques to intimidate and force women to be silent
Women in rape situations often become physically paralyzed with terror or shock and are unable to move or fight
Non-consensual intercourse does not always leave visible signs on the body or genitals.

MYTH: YOU CAN TELL IF SHE HAS REALLY BEEN RAPED BY HOW SHE ACTS**Implications:**

Disbelieves and re-traumatizes the survivor
Invalidate her experiences
Discourage her from seeking help

Facts:

Reactions to rape are highly varied and individual (see section on Rape Trauma Syndrome)
Many women experience a form of shock after rape that leaves them emotionally numb and apparently calm.

MYTH: WOMEN CRY RAPE WHEN THEY REGRET HAVING SEX OR WANT REVENGE**Implications:**

Reinforce stereotypes of the “vindictive women”
Reinforce stereotypes of women as untrustworthy
Re-victimizes and stigmatizes the survivor
Undermines her support for seeking justice.

Facts:

Studies have indicated that only 2% of all reported rapes are false, which is slightly less than the false reporting of other types of crimes.