

Connections

A Biannual Publication of
Washington Coalition of
Sexual Assault Programs

Volume XII

SPRING 2010



Challenging Pop Culture Messages
that Contribute to Sexual Violence

The Power of Media Literacy
for Girls

Dismantling Rape Culture
Messages Through Song

Media Responsibility

Take Action!
Writing to Editors

Youth Media Educates

25 Positive Hip Hop
and Rap Songs

A Media Literacy Approach
to Teaching Kids
About Violence in Media

Sound Relationships
Nutritional Label

Letter from the Editor

Trisha Smith, Advocacy Specialist, WCSAP

There is no denying that the media is a powerful force in contemporary society. With the daunting combination of seemingly endless resources and control over access to information, the media offers us a blueprint for how to act and what to think. Whether you are online, watching TV, or listening to music, you are vulnerable to an onslaught of messages that you may not even be aware of. Their influences are so ingrained in our daily life that they often go unnoticed.

This is why media literacy is so imperative. We are often surrounded by messages that promote a victim-blaming mentality, sensationalize sexual violence, support rigid gender roles, and encourage negative stereotypes of those outside the mainstream of society. And there is no population more strongly targeted than our youth, who are rarely taught the critical thinking skills they need to deal with media messages. While there is debate as to whether media is influencing society or society is influencing media, in the end it feels like a moot point. There is a reciprocal relationship, and if we can change one it will influence the other.

Confronting media's use of power and manipulation is an important aspect of anti-sexual violence work. It can take many forms, but I think songwriter Jello Biafra said it best, "Don't hate the media. Become the media." This issue of *Connections* aims to celebrate that very sentiment.

This issue shares insight from programs that are empowering youth to become media savvy not only by giving them the tools to be critical consumers, but also by giving them a voice. These programs are radical in that they creatively challenge the status quo by giving youth the ability to honestly and accurately express their life experiences, as well as walk out into the world knowing about the manipulations they face daily. We hope you will find the programs as inspiring as we did.

Jennifer Y. Levy-Peck, Program Management Specialist at WCSAP, served as co-editor for this issue of Connections.



"Don't hate the media.
Become the media."
- Jello Biafra



Media Savvy Youth:
Challenging Pop Culture
Messages that Contribute
to Sexual Violence

*The Mission of the
Washington Coalition
of Sexual Assault
Programs is to unite
agencies engaged in
the elimination of
sexual violence
through education,
advocacy, victim
services and
social change.*

Connections Magazine
is published biannually
and mailed to subscribing
members of WCSAP.
For membership information
and to view articles online
visit: www.wcsap.org

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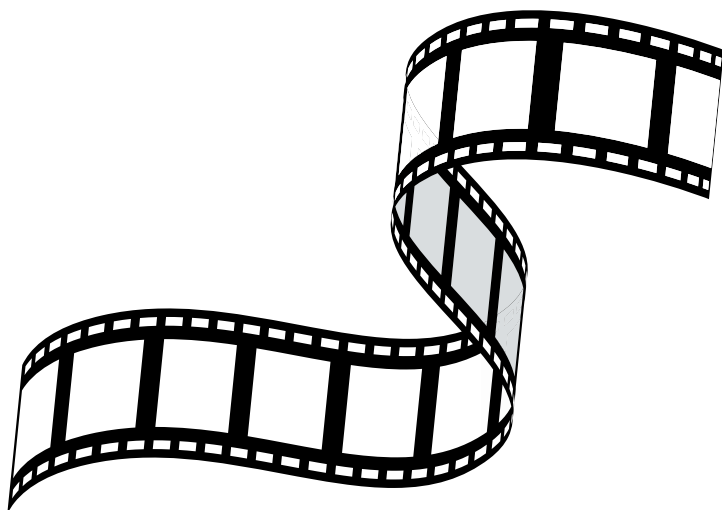
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The Power of Media Literacy for Girls

Nickey Robare, Social Networking and Outreach Manager at Reel Grrls



Nickey Robare attended Hampshire College, where she received a BA in film and cultural studies. Her senior thesis film, The News Is What We Make It, won the 2005 Media Reform Award at the Media That Matters Film Festival. She held a variety of positions at the Independent Publishing Resource Center in Portland, OR, where she also helped organize the Portland Zine Symposium. She has continued to produce short films, which have been screened in festivals nationwide. She comes to Reel Grrls following her first year as an Americorps VISTA at Portland Community Media's OLLIE Youth Media program. It is one of her most deeply held beliefs that the key to positive social change is access to media skills.

By the time she enters kindergarten, the average girl in the United States will have watched 5,000 hours of television (McDonough, 2010). As she grows up, she will see more than 20,000 TV commercials a year (Herr, 2007), and by the time she's 16, she will have spent more time watching television than going to school (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2001). Overwhelmingly, the media she sees will be produced by adult white men. And despite all the time she spends consuming media, she probably will not be taught media literacy skills in school.





"Instead of critiquing themselves,
at Reel Grrls we teach girls
to critique the media they consume."

Maile Martinez, Program Manager

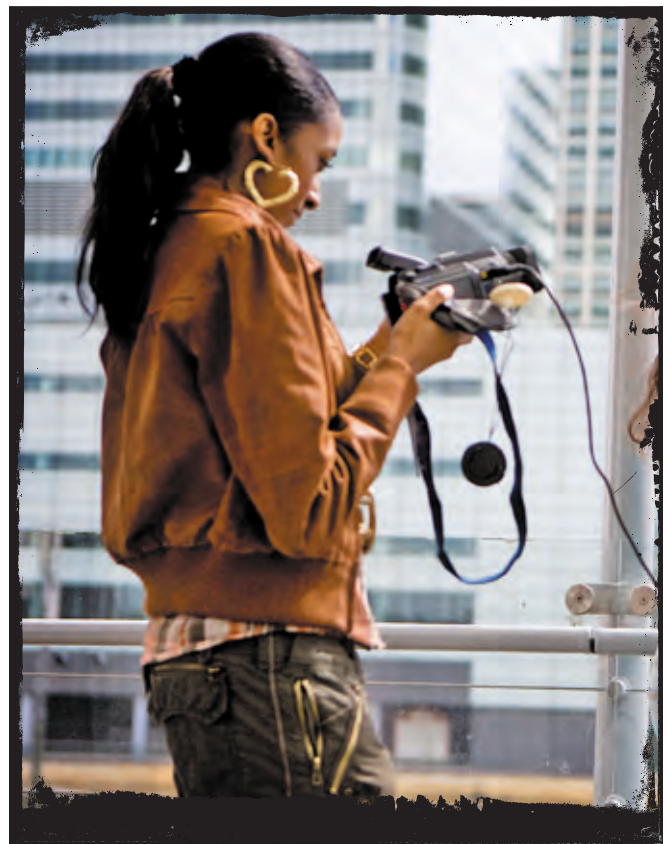
At Reel Grrls, the first year-round media training program exclusively for girls, we see the perils of all this media saturation. When asked to critique sexualized images of women in mainstream fashion magazines, one participant stated, "I don't identify with these women in the magazines, they're really not portraying me." A 2006 study from the Women's Foundation of California found that "girls feel the media puts out many negative and overly sexual images of women. However, they are desensitized and resigned to the status quo." They also found that girls believe they can do very little to shift the media. Without the agency to produce their own alternatives to mainstream media, teenage girls are left in a powerless position against the interests of media conglomerates.

Because girls are coming from these belief systems, Reel Grrls sees that it is absolutely critical for young women to develop the skills to evaluate the media they are exposed to and then empower them to produce their own media. As explained by Program Manager Maile Martinez, "Instead of critiquing themselves, at Reel Grrls we teach girls to critique the media they consume." Reel Grrls gives girls the language with which to evaluate the inequality presented in mainstream media, restoring their personal agency

to fight the messages on screen. Seventeen-year-old Jay Conrad participated in the Reel Grrls Fall Weekend Retreat. After taking part in a media literacy activity, she stated, "It was an exercise that helped us to recognize just how completely women are objectified in media, especially in advertisements. And especially how our sexuality is exploited through these advertisements." Once they are given the language to evaluate media messages, and the opportunity for their opinions to be heard and valued, girls can begin to face media inequalities head on.

Powerful things begin to happen when a girl stops being just a consumer of media and becomes a producer. When given a turn behind the camera, girls in our program will usually first turn inward to tell their personal story. Because girls so rarely see themselves reflected in the media, it is a powerful act to tell their own story. And in telling their personal stories they begin to critique the predominant narrative of girlhood.

In the video *Definition*, created by a group of girls in our introductory video production program, three girls discuss how personal style has affected how they are perceived, both by themselves and by



others. Fourteen-year-old Mauricette says, "I have to admit, the clothes I was wearing before weren't that comfortable... today I feel good about myself and the way I look. It matters because I'm taking care of myself, and it's not for anyone else, it's for me." Messages like this, featuring teenage girls with outspoken self-confidence, are rarely featured in the media.

When girls produce messages like these, they are participating in a truly radical act. Teenage girls' stories are all too often ignored and manipulated. Despite the fact that men and women watch television at equal rates, the stories being told are primarily from a male perspective. In Hollywood, the opportunities for women have actually decreased during the last several years. Women account for only 17% of all executive producers, 7% of directors, 8% of writers, and a measly 2% of cinematographers, according to Martha Lauzen's "Celluloid Ceiling Report" (2010). This poor representation of women behind the camera has led to even poorer representations of women on screen. According to the Parents Television Council (2009), from 2004 to 2009 the increase of violence against women on television has skyrocketed 120% - and violence against teen girls increased a staggering 400%. Without proper education, how can a teenager even begin to process so many negative messages? "In order for my opinion to be heard," one Reel Grrls participant said, "I know I have to be behind the camera, not in front."

We have seen the positive effects Reel Grrls can have on the girls who participate. Monica Olsson became involved with us at age 17. Both of her parents were heroin addicts, and her first film was a powerful examination of their struggle. Drug prevention counselors all over Washington State have used the film to help communities understand the effects of addiction on children. After completing her film, Monica said, "If just one person somewhere can relate to me and have something inside of them click, then my story and what I've learned in my life has some purpose." Monica has continued her connection with Reel Grrls for many years, and now serves as a peer mentor while attending the University of Washington. Today she can look back and say, "Reel Grrls was a huge part of what saved me from losing myself and my direction."

New technologies are making it easier than ever for youth to become the producers of their own culture. With training programs like Reel Grrls, a wave of

positive new media images is coming. We can see that, despite all of the sad statistics on the state of women in media, there is hope. The young women participating in Reel Grrls are the future of a changing industry. They understand the challenges they will face, but have gained the strength to conquer every confrontation. Critical thinking programs like Reel Grrls can lead a girl to higher self-esteem, greater economic opportunities, and more healthy personal choices (Women's Foundation of California, 2007).

We imagine a future where every girl in America can learn the importance of critiquing media messages and creating her own media. As one Reel Grrl put it, "...just seeing what people can really do when they want to make a change, and the power, I mean the influence of a camera is huge. To be able to just take that and make your own message ... it's really proven something to me."

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Dismantling Rape Culture Messages Through Song

Laura Zárate, Arte Sana Founding Executive Director

Laura Zárate is Founding Executive Director of Arte Sana (art heals), one of four agencies recognized in 2003 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a model program for underserved survivors of sexual violence. As a Chicana victim advocate, bilingual training specialist, artist and songwriter, Laura has incorporated the arts throughout her 26 years of victim advocacy work. Her songs were included in a child sexual abuse prevention campaign in Paraguay, South America, and in the Canciones de Conciencia compilation for the Texas State University Educare Training Institute. Laura earned a BA in Psychology from the University of Texas at Austin and describes herself as the "proud madre of two incredible young adults."

While popular songs may convey empowering and positive messages, they are also powerful vehicles for misogynist and victim-blaming attitudes. Rape culture themes can be found in daily personal, community, institutional, popular culture and multimedia expressions.

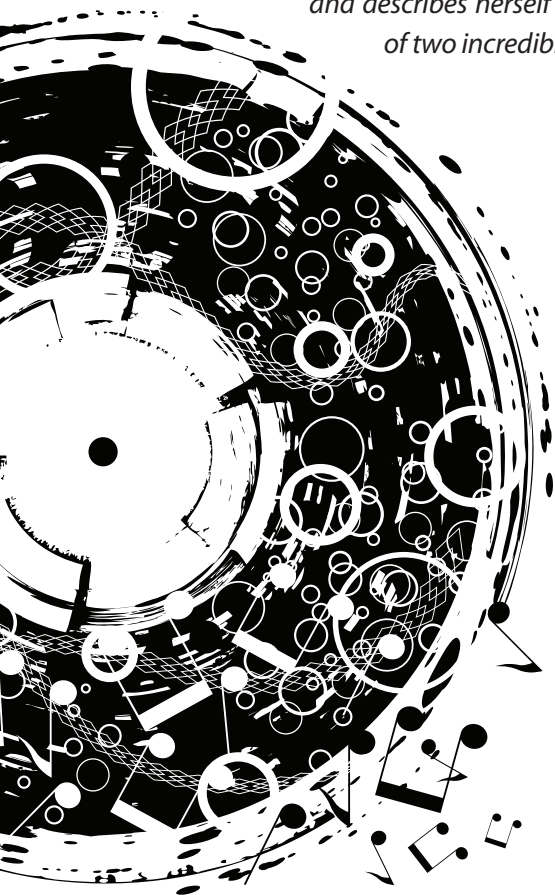
Music plays an important role in many types of cultures - youth culture in particular. A recent survey by the Kaiser Family Institute shows that teens ages 15-18 listen to approximately three hours and 21 minutes of music per day. In addition, they watch nearly 4 ½ hours of TV per day, some of which may include music programs. The power of music is also evident in the international ringtone phenomenon, one of the fastest growing industries worldwide.

According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the troublesome lyrics of some teen music:

- Advocate and glamorize the abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Present suicide as a "solution"
- Display graphic violence
- Describe harmful sexual practices, incest, and a devaluing of women

Rape culture messaging through music is not a new phenomenon, and the following rape culture themes can be found in all genres of music:

- Male entitlement
- Phallic weapon
- Sex with underage females
- Prostitution and sexual exploitation





The importance of media literacy work with youth in response to the ongoing mainstreaming of sex industry references cannot be overemphasized. From the 1980s strip clubs to the current “cardio benefit” promotion, pole dancing has become so pervasive in popular culture that pole dancing classes are offered in gyms and community centers. Pole dancing kits are not only marketed to women, but have also found their way to the toy aisle for little girls. Even a 16-year-old Disney starlet like Miley Cyrus resorted to dancing around a pole (albeit on top of an ice cream cart) at the 2009 Teen Choice Awards.

The Power of Song to Build Awareness

Practically any song from any genre may be used to make a point, stimulate discussion, exemplify a problem, present an alternative, or identify consequences. Although most current recordings or music videos are not ideologically pure or completely consistent with nonviolent or gender equity themes, significant examples of resistance to exploitative images of women may be used to offer empowering risk reduction messages.

Since 1995, I have worked with and witnessed the power of song to promote awareness, healing, and resiliency. The most powerful confirmation of the role that music can play occurred during a high school girl empowerment group session in which I used the song “Torn” performed by Natalie Imbruglia. When asked to interpret the song, most girls referred to the sense of dissolution one feels after a break-up. However one girl saw a clear rape reference. As it turns out, she was a survivor and, because of this particular session and the song, she was connected with the services of the local sexual assault program.

Examples of songs with an indirect or explicit prostitution or sexual exploitation theme from 1930 to 2006:

“Love for Sale”

– Cole Porter/Billie Holiday

“Let Me Entertain You”

– Stephen Sondheim and Jule Styne

“Sundown”

– Gordon Lightfoot

“Walk on the Wild Side”

– Lou Reed

“Hot Child in the City”

– Nick Gilder

“Mexican Blackbird”

– ZZ Top

“Lady Marmalade”

– LaBelle

“Bad Girls”

– Donna Summer

“Back in the Saddle”

– Aerosmith

“Roxanne”

– The Police

“Money Talk”

– The Pretenders

“Fancy”

– Reba McEntire

“A Lap Dance Is So Much Better When the Stripper is Crying”

– Bloodhound Gang

“I’m in Love With A Stripper”

– T-Pain

“Lap Dance”

– N.E.R.D.

“Pop That Pussy”

– Pastor Troy

“What Would You Do?”

– City High

“When the Sun Goes Down”

– The Arctic Monkeys

The benefits of using songs to promote awareness and discussion of sexual assault issues:

- Songs are readily available
- Songs and song lyrics are available instantly online
- Music can serve as a generational and cultural bridge
- Youth culture is ever-changing and the incorporation of songs can help make presentations relevant
- Use of songs can promote two-way educational experiences and the active engagement of participants

The target audience should always be a part of the song selection process in order to assure cultural and generational relevance.

**These songs include the stalking theme.
They span a forty-year period
of American pop culture.**

"I Will Follow Him" – *Little Peggy March (1963)*

"One Way or Another" – *Blondie (1978)*

"Every Breath You Take" – *The Police (1983)*

"Spiderwebs" – *No Doubt (1995)*

"Bugaboo" – *Destiny's Child (1999)*

"Snow White Queen" – *Evanescence (2006)*

Songs in Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Work

To incorporate songs into sexual assault awareness and prevention work:

1. Use songs as an introduction for a particular topic.
2. Use songs in closing a particular topic.
3. If the song is negative...use the surface message of a song to promote an alternative message.

4. Ask the audience members to interpret the song.
 - What seems to be the emotional tone set by the words and music?
 - What is happening, what is the story?
5. Ask the audience members to identify possible feelings, attitudes, and behaviors of song characters. Possible questions:
 - Does this sound like someone you would like to date? Why or why not?
 - Do you think this person respects women? Why or why not?
 - Does it sound like he/she respects herself? Why?
 - Is this person being assertive, aggressive, or passive? Explain.

Recommendations for working with song lyrics:

- Familiarize yourself with all of the lyrics before selecting a song.
- Make sure the content is age-appropriate.
- Make sure the song is culturally relevant.
- Partial lyrics can be included in a presentation for analysis and critique.
- Explicit song lyrics need not be posted in a presentation; the title may suffice.
- When using explicit song lyrics in training workshops with adults always provide an advisory.
- Refrain from passing judgment on a particular artist or group; few groups are exempt. The message should be the focus.

In *Girl-Empowering Songs*, the narrator expresses three or more of the following:

- Accepts responsibility for one's own well-being
- Sets limits and boundaries
- Expresses sexual autonomy and desire
- Values economic independence over economic exploitation
- Expresses emotional independence
- Articulates relationship and intimacy criteria
- Is assertive; can make choices and say "no"
- Has self-respect and expects respect from others
- Expresses the ability to walk away and move on
- Articulates needs
- Refers to lessons learned

- Advises others to take care of themselves
- Expresses pride of cultural heritage
- Is supportive of others who have been used or victimized
- Decries injustice and exploitation

The best way to select songs for presentations is to have an ongoing dialogue with audience members. Arte Sana's song selection is based on suggestions from participants in training and presentation session as well as from victim advocates.

The following is a partial list of songs used during Arte Sana's Girl Empowerment Festivals (GEF) from 2004 – 2009 and those recently added to the GEF playlist to promote respect, moving on, and resiliency.

"Just a Girl" – No Doubt

"Respect" – Aretha Franklin

"Video" – India Arie

"Beautiful" – Christina Aguilera

"Can't Hold Us Down" – Christina Aguilera

"Don't Tell Me" – Avril Lavigne

"I Will Survive" – Gloria Gaynor

"Fighter" – Christina Aguilera

"Survival" – Marcia Griffiths

"We are Family" – Sister Sledge

"Hope" – Dixie Chicks

"You Gotta Be" – Des'ree

"Pocketful of Sunshine" – Natasha Bedingfield

"If I Were a Boy" – Beyonce Knowles

"This is Me" – Demi Lovato

"This Girl" – Nikki Flores

About Arte Sana

Founded in 2001, Arte Sana (art heals) is a national Latina-led nonprofit committed to ending sexual violence and other forms of gender-based aggressions and engage marginalized communities as agents of change. Arte Sana promotes awareness, healing, and empowerment through bilingual professional training, community education, and the arts.

The Arte Sana website includes a list of songs in both English and Spanish for addressing various topics. www.arte-sana.com

Laura Zárte has offered multiple variations of the 'Empowerment through Song' workshop since 1998, at the first National Sexual Assault Prevention Conference and the Tenth International Conference on Sexual Assault and Harassment on Campus in 2000, and at state coalition conferences for the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, and the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault. She may be contacted at artesanando@yahoo.com.

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Media Responsibility



Take Back the News

Take Back the News was founded by Emily Brandt in 2001. It began as a print project in an independent Boston-based newspaper in response to local misrepresentation of a highly publicized sexual assault. The goal was to provide victims of sexual assault a chance to tell the public what happened in their own words. The following excerpts are reprinted, with permission, from their webpage <http://www.takebackthenews.org>

People's attitudes toward sexual assault and its victims and survivors are largely driven by the way the crime is reported by mainstream media. Many news articles that report a rape focus on the actions of the victim or include irrelevant details that lead the reader to infer that a rape did not actually occur.

For example, the *New York Post* article "2 Cops in Sex Rap - Busted After Traffic Stop; B'klyn Cops Arrested on Sex Rap" (November 21, 2005) describes the alleged rape of a woman by two on-duty police officers who stopped her in the middle of the night for not wearing a seat belt. The reporters quote several "accounts" of what happened, including a version told by an unknown source (neither the victim nor the alleged perpetrator, potentially a friend or acquaintance of the alleged perpetrator) in which the woman *invited* the cops back to her apartment and had consensual sex with one of the officers. The article makes a point of noting that the woman "refused medical attention," as if this indicates that no rape occurred. The biased article *concludes* by stating that one of the officers was "married with a child," as if having a family exonerated him.

News articles such as these help shape societal attitudes toward sexual assault, where the victim is blamed and doubts are raised as to whether an assault even occurred. Our goal is to change attitudes about sexual assault, starting with the media.



Examples of Media Misrepresentation of Rape and Sexual Assault

- 1 An insinuation that the victim is lying, often made by the defense attorney or the perpetrator, that is not countered by the victim or an advocate for the victim.
- 2 The use of sexual or romantic, rather than violent or criminal, language to describe the crime. Words such as "sex," "affair," or "seduction" are often used to describe the crime, particularly if the victim is a woman or a child. The language used to describe male-on-male rape is often more reflective of the violence that it is.
- 3 Victim blaming, based on the victim's profession, personal life, social status, behaviors, etc.
- 4 Biased discussion of the victim's history, but not the perpetrator's.
- 5 Description of the details of the crime in a pseudo-pornographic or titillating manner.
- 6 Media outlets that provide greater coverage to cases in which the accuser's credibility is questionable, which both discourages other victims from coming forward and hurts the accused if they are in fact innocent.
- 7 Lack of perspective from the victim's side, for example by a lack of interviews with victim advocates; similarly, in most cases the victim is not interviewed by the press (often by choice or to protect the victim's privacy).
- 8 Reporters who publish the defense attorney's quotations without putting them into perspective by providing context about rape/sexual assault.
- 9 In cases with homosexual or racial overtones, a focus on the issues of homosexuality and race instead of the rape or gender issues.
- 10 The location in the newspaper of an article on rape that affects public perception of the case; for example, including an article about rape in the sports section plays up the heroic attributes of the athletes being accused.
- 11 When the accused is a member of the military, the use of a tone of shock and anomaly, sometimes resulting in the accused being portrayed as patriots and neighborhood boys rather than criminals.
- 12 Newspapers that tend to highlight and publish instances in which someone has been wrongly convicted and imprisoned for rape. In those cases they neglect to address whether the accuser was lying about being raped or if the wrong person was captured by police. As a result, these articles imply innocent men are very likely to be accused of rape and women often lie about rape.

Examples of Media Underrepresentation

1. A lack of coverage of cases involving acquaintance rape. Newspapers tend to focus on rapes perpetrated by a stranger with a weapon; rapes perpetrated by famous athletes, entertainers, etc.; or rapes involving children.
2. Little media coverage of the work done by rape crisis advocates (greater coverage of their work could help the public better understand the issues and perhaps encourage victims to disclose).
3. Little coverage of the number of rapes publicly reported on college campuses and similar institutions.
4. Little coverage of updates on the technology involved with using and detecting date rape drugs.
5. Little coverage of how rape is used as a weapon of war.
6. Little coverage of rape in prison, contextualized with victim advocacy.
7. Little coverage of rape experienced by women of color, and how violence against women and racism coexist.

Examples of Appropriate Media Representation

1. Including both the victim's and the perpetrator's voice.
2. The victim is treated with respect, and the implication is that a crime did in fact occur.
3. The severity of the crime is acknowledged.
4. Attention is given to the emotional/psychological long-term effects of the crime, in addition to any physical consequences.
5. Attention is given to the broader issue of sexual assault and the difficulty in prosecuting the crime.
6. Follows all ethical guidelines indicated by the Associated Press.

Samples of Problematic Headlines

“Woman in Five-Day Sex-Slave Nightmare”

July 17, 2007; New York Post

-This headline sensationalizes the crime.

“Fla. Teens Accused of Gang Rape Attack”

July 7, 2007; Newsday

-This headline makes it seem that the crime is the accusation of gang rape, rather than the gang rape itself.

“Jury Convicts Ex-Principal of Having Sex with Student”

March 30, 2007; New York Times

-This headline implies that an adult can “have sex” with a child, when in reality this situation is clearly rape.

“Bronx ‘Sex’ Teach Faces Music: Major Rap In Minor ‘Rape’ ”

March 7, 2007; New York Post

-This headline both sensationalizes the crime and implies that an adult can “have sex” with a child, which is clearly rape.

“ ‘Forgetful’ rape suspect”

February 10, 2007; New York Post

-This headline discredits the victim, and decontextualizes the trauma of rape which may include loss of memory.

“Victim recounts graphic details at rape trial”

January 30, 2007; Newsday

-This headline promises titillating details, sensationalizing the crime.

“Home Invader Rapists”

January 20, 2007; New York Post

-This headline aims to shock and scare, decontextualizing rape as something that occurs primarily among strangers.

Take Action!

Writing to Editors



Take Back the News

Writing your first letter to an editor can be a little nerve-wracking. But remember that millions of people do this every day, and very few of them are professional writers. Just be brief, be clear, speak your mind, and send it along in a timely manner. The worst thing that can happen is that it won't be printed. But even so, the staff of the paper will have heard your concerns and may be positively affected by them. So take a deep breath, sit down for ten minutes, and write!

Step 1: Brainstorm Your Letter

So you've just read a problematic article about rape and you want the editor to know what you think. Brainstorm your response before you write your letter. Underline the parts of the article that you want to focus on, jotting down notes. Then zero in on the one main point you want to convey to the editor. Stay focused on that. Letters to editors must be timely. When you read an article that offends you, write a letter to the editor that day. Generally newspapers will not print a letter relating to an article that is more than a few days old.

Step 2: Draft Your Letter

A letter to an editor should be concise, clear, and professional - but still sound like you. Here is one relatively simple model you can follow that will work every time!

- **Greet Your Reader**
(Dear NY Times Editor:)
- **Identify the Article**
(I am writing in response to "article title" by "reporter's name" printed on "date.")
- **Identify the Problem Using an Example**
(Stating that "quote from the article that made you mad" perpetuates the myth that most rapes are committed by crazed strangers.)
- **Explain Why it's a Problem**
(The vast majority of rapes are actually committed by someone the victim knows, and yet these cases are rarely reported in your paper.)
- **Offer an Alternative**
(When reporting on a stranger rape, please contextualize the case by reminding readers that stranger rapes are not nearly as common as rapes committed by people the victim knows.)
- **Close and Sign**
(Sincerely, your name, your email, your address, your day and evening phone numbers)

Step 3: Check Your Work

Your letter should be concise - no longer than 150-250 words - so omit anything that does not help make your point or that sounds like a rant. Proofread your work! You don't want to send a letter with spelling and grammar errors. Refer back to your brainstorm. Did you convey your main point?

Step 4: Send Your Letter!

Send your letter to the editor and to the reporter! The contact info will be on the paper's website or letters page. Here are some common addresses: letters@newsday.com, letters@nytimes.com, and letters@nypost.com.

Now that you've written your letter to the editor, invite your friends to do the same! And of course you can use these same guidelines to voice your concerns about any issue you see printed.



Sample Letter to the Editor

Dear *Metro* Editor:

Your "the naked city" column headline on July 3rd read "Crime: Former Olympian charged with raping 5 women." The crime is obviously not that the man was charged with rape, but that five women were attacked and raped.

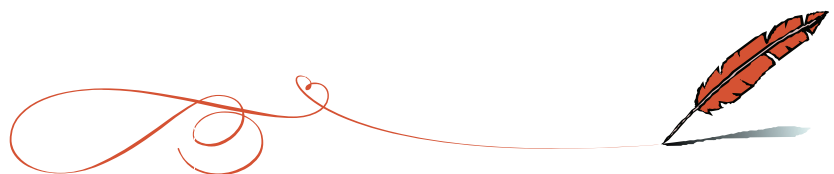
It is common that in a media-covered rape case the public is quick to assume that a rape did not occur and that the victim is lying. Headlines such as yesterday's perpetuate the notion that it is worse to be accused of or charged with rape than it is to be raped. On the very same page, your headlines read that a cop was killed ("Cop struck, killed by minivan") and a gay woman unjustly expelled from a restaurant ("Lesbian booted from eatery after bathroom gender flap").

It would make sense that the rape story would follow suit and be framed in a way that is sympathetic to the victims, not the perpetrator - for instance "Five women raped in parks." Please be more careful in how you frame your news stories.

Sincerely,

Emily Brandt

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Youth Media Educates

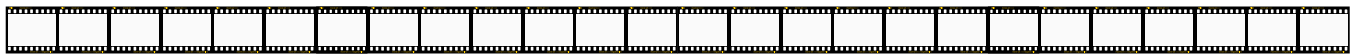
By Taaj Middleton, SCAN (Seattle Community Access Network) Youth Media Program Manager

Taaj Middleton started her career in entertainment television over a decade ago, working on various television productions. After working in cable television for some time, she subsequently settled into a position with ABC Network Inc. as the supervising specials and comedies acquisitioner in their On Air Promotions department. After four years with ABC she moved on to work for a small promo house which afforded her the opportunity to work as a production coordinator on such shows as The Tony Danza Show, Judge Judy and The Tyra Banks Show. Upon moving to Washington, she began working with local youth arts programs, helping with their video media components. It was here that Taaj discovered a new passion for working with low income and at-risk youth in a nonprofit setting. As SCAN Youth Media's (SYM) Youth Program Manager, Taaj has rebuilt the department from the ground up, creating new community relationships, developing youth workshops and classes and acquiring and producing youth content for SYM's weekly youth programming.

SCAN Youth Media (SYM) is a media program that provides youth ages 9-18 with media literacy and technical training in video media arts. Through after-school workshops, summer camps, and video and studio production classes, young people gain hands-on experience in video production. The program leads to heightened self-esteem, building of marketable skills, and the discovery of relevant and creative ways for participants to make their voices heard, in an effort to effect change in their communities, locally and perhaps even globally.

SYM has a fully mobile video production lab that allows SYM's staff and teaching artists to meet any community's youth right where they are. SYM has the benefit of a wide range of diverse program partners, including Reel Grrls, Youth Speaks Seattle, The Metro Center YMCA, Asian Counseling and Referral Services, and the Woodland Park Zoo.





Most of the topics of the works created by SYM are youth driven. In a current workshop by students at Whitman Middle School, a group of girls have chosen “personal safety” as their theme. Their video focuses on being aware of your surroundings and what young women need to do to protect themselves. Through a partnership with Asian Counseling and Referral Services, students at Madison and Washington Middle Schools are learning how to create healthy relationships and are educating their peers through video blogging and short films. Mentors from Garfield and West Seattle High Schools assist these students.

SYM also delivers more than five hours of youth-generated programming, five days a week. Every workshop SYM conducts produces media that can be seen on SCAN, Seattle’s public access television station, which airs on Comcast channel 77 and Broadstripe channel 23, and streams live over the Internet at www.scantv.org. Along with content generated through SYM workshops and classes, our partners provide programming, from spoken word slams to in-studio live music. SYM programming is developing into quite the premiere showcase for local talented filmmakers, poets, musicians, and producers. You can visit SYM on the web at www.scantv.org, on the youth tab.

SCAN Youth Media is also proud to be able to provide a next-level experience in youth media. SYM is in a unique position as a department within SCAN, Seattle’s largest public access station. As such, we’re not only able to offer classes inside a professional studio environment, but we’re also able to provide intern and volunteer opportunities to youth looking to sharpen their skills on professional video productions both in the field and in the studio, within a professional and creatively stimulating atmosphere.

While SCAN Youth Media’s specialty is technical training in the area of video production, we also focus heavily on media literacy. As SYM’s Program Manager, I like to look at our media literacy mission as an attempt to create healthy consumers. To reduce the risk of a generation of overly sexualized young people or the next generation of Americans living beyond their means, now more than ever, young people need to be made aware that in addition to the peer pressure they’re taught to resist at school, there’s an even greater, more subtle pressure they need to resist when it comes to media.

Media literacy is about putting the power back into the hands of consumers, in particular our young people. Media literacy is about understanding the psychology behind marketing and the reality behind some of the television and print images that create unrealistic aspirations for youth. Once young people know that they are being manipulated, there is a sense of power that comes with understanding the absurdity of what’s being forced upon them. That’s exactly what SCAN Youth Media aims for – that “light bulb” moment.

The media - video, news, print and radio – are a strong influence on the way we view ourselves and the world around us. Media tells us how to look, what to wear and how to “fit in.” Marketers understand the dollar value in targeting those who are most vulnerable. Youth fall prey to thousands of deceptive media messages on display in their magazines, music videos, television shows, and music. It seems as though there is an all-out assault on today’s youth. Sitting a young woman down in front of primetime television is almost self-esteem suicide. With shows like *The Hills* and *90210* and today’s popular music, young women and men alike don’t stand a chance. In so many ways, media tells our young people that they will never be pretty or handsome enough, they’ll never have the right look; and dangerously for young women, you can never be too sexy, regardless of age. Youth can often feel powerless and lost amongst the constant barrage of images and sound bites reminding them of who they aren’t.

The next important step in taking back your power is learning how to effectively use your voice, and SCAN Youth Media trains young people to do just that. Through the media they produce, young people are able to stand up and let their peers know that they don’t have to succumb to the images and messages being forced upon them.

“As a teaching artist for SYM, I have seen how teaching video production as a collaborative endeavor has had a positive impact on the girls and boys that I’ve taught. By teaching these youth that they can share their voices as producers of media they become savvy consumers as well.”

- Andre Middleton

25 Positive Hip Hop and Rap Songs



Tracy Wright and Lynne Walter from the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault

"Katrina Clap" – Mos Def

"The Light" – Common

"Jesus Walks" – Kanye West

"Liberation"

– Outkast featuring Cee-lo and Erykah Badu

"Ladies First" – Queen Latifah

"Why" – JadaKiss featuring Anthony Hamilton

"Get By" – Talib Kweli

"Summthin' Gotta Give"

– Big Boi featuring Mary J. Blige

"Runaway Love" – Ludacris featuring Mary J. Blige

"I Know I Can" – Nas

"Fight the Power" – Public Enemy

"Get Up, Get Out and Get Something"

– Goodie Mob featuring Outkast

"Beautiful Skin" – Goodie Mob

"Sirens" – Little Brother

"Let's Talk About Sex" – Salt and Pepper

"Keep Ya Head Up" – 2Pac

"We're All in the Same Gang"

– West Coast All-Stars

"Soldier" – Erykah Badu

"Hopeful" – Twista

"Umi Says" – Mos Def

"Hip Hop" – Dead Prez

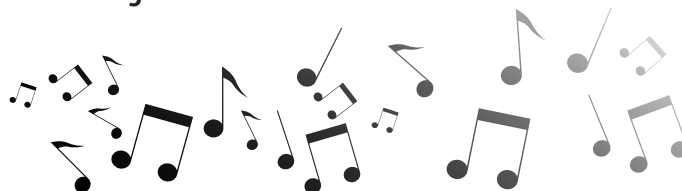
"Tennessee" – Arrested Development

"Good Day" – Nappy Roots

"Freedom"

– Various Artists (Panther Movie Soundtrack)

"Just the Two of Us" – Will Smith



Ways to engage youth and use hip hop to raise awareness about sexual violence

Host a rap contest with participants writing non-explicit lyrics. This is a way to capitalize on the creative energy of youth. Winner's song can be uploaded to website and used in PSAs during Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Sponsor discussions/workshops led by teens about hip hop and sexual violence. These develop leadership skills and talents to speak in front of others as peer-to-peer educators.

Create a CD with positive rap music and give to youth. Use the distribution of these CDs as a teachable moment to help youth become more conscious about the music they listen to and its impact on perceptions and psyche.

Look for small grants to host an outreach awareness day. This is a way to merge social justice and hip hop through workshops and interactive activities. The North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault has information on this initiative. Contact Tracy D. Wright at tracy@nccasa.org or (919) 870-8881 ext 15.

Consider a statewide teen conference. The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault has program called Students Taking Action for Respect (STAR) that hosts a statewide conference for teens. For more information visit <http://www.taasa.org/star/index.html>

Find new ways to connect. Mental health practitioners have begun to use hip hop therapy as a means of helping youth address traumatic experiences.

Teaching Kids About Violence In Media

Tessa Jolls, President and CEO of the Center for Media Literacy

Tessa Jolls has held her position at the Center for Media Literacy (CML) since 1999. Her primary focus is working in partnership to demonstrate how media literacy works through innovative school and community-based implementation programs internationally. She contributes actively to the development of the media literacy field through her speaking, writing and consulting, through curriculum design, training and research programs, and through publishing and disseminating new educational resources through CML's extensive website, www.medialit.org

How do we—as parents and professionals—help youth become aware of media stereotypes surrounding gender and violence? Especially when young people tend to dismiss the effects of media violence on themselves and on society?

Our media diet is much like our nutritional diet: what we take in makes a difference. Since media is often saturated with violent images and sounds, the quantity of media to which a young person is exposed definitely has an effect on their attitudes and behaviors. The Center for Media Literacy (CML) recently participated with UCLA's Southern California Injury Prevention Research Center to evaluate the CML curriculum *Beyond Blame: Challenging Violence in the Media*. At the beginning of the study, middle school students were so inured to violent images that they were often incapable of even seeing that violent depictions were occurring in media, much less understanding these media effects. Teachers spent time with students to help them explore what violence is, and how to identify verbal or physical violence in the media they were using.

Students began to see for themselves that media violence is employed as a storytelling device to attract attention and to keep users engaged. "Even after the semester was over, my students kept coming up to me to tell me how many violent 'jolts per minute' they counted in some of their favorite games and television shows," Beth Thornhill, a teacher with Palm Springs Unified School District reported. "The students were fascinated by how violence is used in media as an easy choice for conflict resolution."

Once students were able to identify violent media episodes, they were taught the four effects of media violence, in an effort to help them understand that their media choices do indeed make a difference.

These Four Effects of Violent Media Have Long Been Known:

1. Acting aggressively
2. Being more afraid of the outside world
3. Being less willing to help someone in trouble
4. Desiring more and more media violence

(American Psychological Association, 1993)

Mrs. Thornhill reported, "One student told me that he and his friends played a very violent video game, and then they went for a bike ride in their neighborhood. The boys began throwing rocks and sticks, and the student suddenly realized that they were 'charged up' because of the video game. He made a direct connection, and he said he discouraged his friends from the rough play."

Teachers who participated in the *Beyond Blame* study also reported that students sometimes began sharing personal experiences with violence in their homes or communities. Although this sharing was discouraged due to privacy concerns, it was clear that students had been exposed to violence and that they were applying what they were learning in class.



But how do students learn to make choices regarding the media they use? The Center for Media Literacy's Five Key Questions® are a useful tool for giving youth a quick, internalized "filtering process" for making choices and decisions about media.

These Five Key Questions are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might others understand this message differently?
4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in – or omitted from – this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

Through the lens of these Five Key Questions, students learn to discern the content and the values and lifestyles being represented in the media they use. But most importantly, they begin to see that all media is created with purpose, and that the combination of sex and violence is a highly profitable media business that also is easy for world-wide audiences to grasp, regardless of language. The potent combination of sexuality and violence is a proven formula that has been branded again and again, whether through *Grand Theft Auto* or through *Avatar*. When students see for themselves that this media violence is a mechanism to sell, they begin to understand their relationship with violent and sexual media in a whole new way. Ultimately, they see the power of their own choices.

For more resources, try some of the following links:

Center for Media Literacy (www.medialit.org).

"Five Key Questions That Can Change the World" offers five sample lessons for each Key Question. All lessons are correlated with national McRel standards in language arts and/or social sciences.

"Beyond Blame: Challenging Violence in the Media" will be launched in coming months, and contains an Educator Guide with 10 lessons, a Pre-Post Test Assessment, Student Workbook, and a Professional Development Module.

The Media Education Foundation (www.mediaed.org)

About Face (www.about-face.org)

Jackson Katz, Byron Hurt and Don McPherson
(www.jacksonkatz.com , www.bhurt.com , and www.donaldmcpherson.com)

Love is Not Abuse (www.loveisnotabuse.com)

Reference

American Psychological Association (July 1993). *Summary report of the American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth*. Washington, DC: APA.

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Sound Relationships **Nutritional Label**

Start Strong

The Sound Relationships Nutritional Label was created by Start Strong teen peer leaders and staff at the Boston Public Health Commission. Start Strong is the largest ever national initiative to rally entire communities to promote healthy relationships as the way to prevent teen dating violence and abuse.

Music, like food, can feed our brains and give us energy. But, it also can be filled with ingredients that can affect us negatively. Some music may even have an influence on our health and the health of our relationships. This instrument will help you evaluate the “nutritional” value of the music you might listen to. We want you to put on your headphones, turn up the volume and become a song lyrics nutritionist. Just follow these easy steps.

STEP ONE: Find a song

Select a song. Find the lyrics of the song either from the CD insert, or search for them online. Print out the lyrics, and read them to get a feel for the main themes in the song.

STEP TWO: Determine if the song has a relationship theme

Songs with a relationship theme describe an emotional or physical connection between two or more people and should support, celebrate or glorify the unhealthy or healthy characteristics of the relationship.

STEP THREE: Score the song lyrics

Carefully examine the song’s title and all the lyrics in the chorus and verses of the song. Now look at the Song Lyric Scoring Label to the left. Check the “PRESENT” box for each relationship ingredient that you find in the song. The definitions for each relationship ingredient are at the bottom of the label. Finally, for each ingredient that is present in the song, assign it a score from 1-10 in the “INTENSITY LEVEL” box based on how much of that relationship ingredient you feel is in the song. A score of 1 would indicate that there is a very low level of that relationship ingredient in the song while a score of 10 would indicate a very high level of that relationship ingredient. When assigning an intensity score, consider how those particular lyrics impact the overall message of the song.

STEP FOUR: Total your numbers

Add up the scores from the intensity column in both the unhealthy and healthy sections. These totals indicate the unhealthy and healthy relationship “nutritional” value of the song’s lyrics.

STEP FIVE: Balance your “lyrical” diet

Use this tool whenever you want to find out the relationship ingredients of a song. Just like with the food we eat, it is important to have a balanced “song diet” that includes lots of healthy relationship ingredients. Knowing the ingredients will help you make an informed decision about which songs will promote good relationship health.

Nutritional Impact

Artist:

Song title:

Serving Size: Min:

Sec:

Amount per serving:	Present (X)	Intensity level (1-10)
Unhealthy Relationship Ingredients		
Drama		
Possession/obsession		
Disrespect		
Relationship = sex		
Manipulation		
Total Unhealthy		
Healthy Relationship Ingredients		
Fun/Enjoyable		
Support		
Respect		
Equality		
Trust		
Total Healthy		

The song may portray: **Drama:** a belief that making up/breaking up, yelling, bitter arguing, destroying property or a general sense that unhealthy conflict in the relationship is part of a normal relationship. **Possession/Obsession:** a belief that another person is an object to use for one’s personal benefit. This could also include stalking, objectification, and controlling behavior. **Disrespect:** a belief that it is acceptable to disregard another person’s feelings, ideas, opinions and wishes. This could include name calling, put downs, minimizing language, and cheating. **Relationship=sex:** a belief that the main component or focus of the relationship is sex. **Manipulation:** a belief that it is acceptable to lie or use another person’s emotions or vulnerabilities to get what is desired. This could include guilt trips, lying, and using alcohol to get sex. **Fun/Enjoyable:** a belief that relationships are enjoyable and fun. **Support:** a belief that a relationship includes building up the other person’s confidence and strengths. This could include encouraging another person to make healthy decisions to better themselves, even when the other person may not totally agree. **Respect:** a belief that another person has value and is appreciated and recognized for their ideas, thoughts, and decisions. This could include the use of positive or supportive words to describe the other person. **Equality:** a belief that both parties share in decision making and are free to choose what is right for them. One person does not have power over the other either in decision making or sex. **Trust:** a belief that the other person in the relationship has your best interest at heart. This could include being faithful and honest.

Prepared by the Boston Public Health Commission, 2009

Resources

Did you know . . . that WCSAP members have access to check out our library items? It's true. We mail them to you, you mail them back. Here are a few we currently have available.



Animating Difference: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Contemporary Films for Children

Type: Book

Takes a look at the way animated films address race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity



Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes

Type: Book

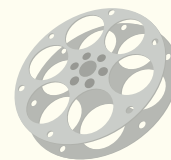
Documentary that examines sexism, violence, and homophobia that can be found in hip-hop culture



The Fat Girl's Guide to Life

Type: Book

A poignant and humorous look at the pressures society puts on women to be thin, offering inspiring ways to revision the world



Killing Us Softly 4: Advertising's Image of Women

Type: Film

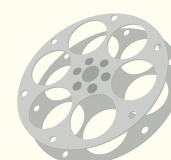
The fourth installment of this ground-breaking documentary series that takes a critical look at the impact of advertising on our society



Color of Rape: Gender and Race in Television's Public Spheres

Type: Book

Looks how issues of race and gender impact the way rape is discussed on television



Writing About Media

Type: Film

A media literacy curriculum kit that includes video clips, discussion topics, and writing tools



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