

Transcript: RAPE CULTURE & INTERSECTIONS WITH RACISM (both parts)

Slide 1: This presentation will discuss different examples of how rape culture is ingrained in our culture, history and systems. We will also review different aspects of how rape culture is exhibited throughout our daily lives. Rape Culture is a widely used term describing a system of beliefs in which rape and sexual violence are common and inevitable.

Slide 2: Definitions. Rape culture is a term that was coined by feminists in the United States in the 1970's. A term to capture prevalent attitudes, norms, practices, and media condone, normalize, excuse and encourage sexualized violence. Sexist jokes, victim blaming, minimizing sexual violence, and sexual objectification.

Rape culture is a complex set of beliefs that encourage male sexual aggression and supports violence against women, non-masculine males, transgender individuals, and, really, anyone who is not conforming to ridged gender roles.

It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent. In a rape culture, women as well as LGBT people experience a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to touching to rape itself. These constant social messages create norms. Over time, these norms create our history.

A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women as the norm. In a rape culture people of all genders assume that sexual violence is a fact of life-- inevitable. However, much of what we accept as inevitable is in fact the expression of values and attitudes that can change. In a rape culture people of all genders assume that sexual violence is a fact of life. We see it as inevitable. However, much of what we accept as inevitable is in fact the expression of values and attitudes that can change.

Slide 3: In this presentation we are looking at aspects of our lives that contribute to, and make up, Rape Culture. All the aspects when combined show a comprehensive picture of how and why sexual assault continues to be tolerated and even encouraged in our society. It is why sexual violence continues to persist. Let's go through some of these examples.

Slide 4: Street harassment is sexual, gender-based, and bias-motivated harassment that takes place in public spaces like the street, the supermarket, and the social media we use every day. At its core is a power dynamic that constantly reminds historically subordinated groups of our vulnerability to assault in public spaces. Street harassment punishes women, LGBTQ+ people, and other marginalized groups for being themselves in the world.

Street harassment is not about sexual gratification. It's about power. If street harassment were about getting dates, it would be a "spectacularly unsuccessful strategy." Instead, street harassment is about "putting people in their place." Sometimes it's sexual, sometimes it's racist, sometimes it's homophobic, and sometimes it's all of the above and more. Whatever form it takes, it tells us that we're not safe in the physical or online spaces we share with friends, relatives, acquaintances, and strangers.

Some actions are commonly overlooked as a part of the continuum of violence, such as: Whistles, comments about appearance, leering, demanding a smile, sexually explicit gestures, etc. More overt behaviors are generally understood as sexual harassment, such as: Groping, indecent exposure, stalking, etc. The former is addressed in the image here from Stop Telling Women to Smile, an art series by Tatyana Fazlalizadeh. The work attempts to address gender based street harassment by placing drawn portraits of women, composed with captions that speak directly to offenders, outside in public spaces. <http://stoptellingwomentosmile.com/>

Slide 5: Another way that rape culture is reinforced is in systems. How institutions set up their rules, policies and how they respond to sexual assault / sexual harassment can indirectly promote sexual assault and bolster sexism. School dress codes can support the idea that clothing, suggestive or not is an acceptable way to determine the amount of respect others deserve.

School administrators typically believe dress codes benefit the school environment by placing an emphasis on education and reducing distractions for students. However, when examining dress codes at schools, we can often see that girls bodies are targeted as inappropriate. Ex, too much cleavage, bare shoulders, leggings, shorts, short skirts.

When sent home, told to change or told not to wear again, the message is usually that their outfits are distracting, i.e. tempting boys/men. This “distracting” message is a coded way schools and institutions begin sexualizing young girls.

Children under no circumstances should be told that their clothing is responsible for another’s bad behaviors. We really need to emphasize this message continues to happen in gendered ways where girls are blamed for boys behaviors which sets the stage for future views on sex and gender roles.

Slide 6: Look at national statistics for rape compared with the statistics for assault and battery. (RAINN - Rape Abuse Incest National Network). The disparity shows a societal leniency toward rape as opposed to another, and generally less serious, violent crime. Less than half of all rapes are actually reported. Only 3% of rapists spend even a day in jail. Campus rape rates haven’t changed in the last 20 years. 2-8% of charges may be false, but students think up to 50% of rape reports are fabricated.

- How do you think these statistics make people who have been sexually assaulted feel?
- Do you think they feel like reporting to the police?
- Do you think these statistics embolden offenders?
- Do you think they could embolden someone who is not yet an offender, to commit sexual assault?

PAUSE the recording and write down your reflections.

Slide 7:

In March, 2016, a Santa Clara County jury found Brock Turner guilty of three felonies: assault with intent to commit rape of an intoxicated person, penetration of an intoxicated person, and penetration of an unconscious person. The conviction stemmed from the charming, athletic, wealthy, white Stanford student’s arrest in 2015 after his victim blacked out at a frat party and woke up in a hospital covered in pine needles and dried blood, with bandages on her hands and elbows and no underwear. She’d been found by two passersby, unconscious behind a dumpster, dress around her waist, naked from the waist

down with Turner raping her. He tried to make a run for it, but the passersby chased him and pinned him to the ground until the police showed up.

Despite a two-year minimum sentence associated with these kind of convictions, Turner was sentenced to six months in county jail and probation (served 3 months). In a letter Turner read to the judge, he described himself as an “inexperienced drinker and party-goer” who was “shattered by the party culture” he “briefly experienced” at college. He maintained in the statement that “in no way was I trying to rape anyone.” In a now-infamous letter to the judge, Turner’s father argued that his son should not be sent to prison for “20 minutes of action.”

For many people the Stanford Rape Case highlighted rape culture for a lot of people. Many systems failed the victim.

Identify male privilege / white privilege / class privilege / athlete privilege).

Slide 8: Victim Blaming. Like the dress code issue we talked about earlier; the girl is responsible for not tempting boys/men. Can you see how those are connected?

“Rape culture manifests in myriad ways...but its most devilish trick is to make the average, noncriminal person identify with the person accused, instead of the person reporting the crime. Rape culture encourages us to scrutinize victims’ stories for any evidence that they brought the violence onto themselves – and always to imagine ourselves in the terrifying role of Good Man, Falsely Accused, before we ‘rush to judgment’. That is a quote by Kate Harding.

Have you heard statements like these before? Have you ever thought them? It is okay if you have thought them before. We have unconscious victim-blaming inside us all the time and it sometimes comes up before our rational mind can. It is because of all the stuff we hear and all that we have talked about so far. This is rape culture.

Slide 9: Media Messages. Consent is an agreement between individuals prior to any sexual activity that clearly communicates which activities each person is comfortable engaging in. Consent can be withdrawn by either individual at any point in time. Consent is often used in talking about sex but there are a lot of ways consent can be practiced. An example of this is Parents allowing children to make a choice about hugging another relative.

Slide 10: Objectification distances us from other people and makes it easier to excuse and condone violence. Objectification is a critical component of rape culture. To objectify means to make into an object. A thing. Something less than a full person. This is why offenders only offend on some people, not all person they come in contact with. So then who becomes objects? How do they become objects? What are these pictures implying? What is the message?

Being reduced to property or Women are to be won like “trophy wife” or “scoring”. Calling someone a name like SLUT or other names that are negative or inanimate, makes it so much easier to dehumanize them- treat them as less than. In middle school or elementary school, girls that have developed maybe faster than other might be referred to as “Tits” instead of their name. This is making a person a body part- not a person anymore. This is also an example of sexism.

Slide 11: Male entitlement. Female-identified individuals are not the only ones who are internalizing sexist messages. Men/boys are also receiving these same messages. We will begin to look at how some of these beliefs can be seen as warning signs.

The idea of the friend zone supports the gender expectations that men are owed sex. Example: The term refers to a platonic relationship where one party has unrequited romantic feelings for the other. Figuring out how to get out of the friend zone has become one of the cornerstones of Internet culture. The “friend zone” is inherently sexist. Although the term “friend zone” is gender-neutral, it is used most often to describe male-female relationships, where the male is the friend-zonee and the female the object of unrequited love/sex. This is not because women are “friend-zoned” less frequently than men are, but because women are conditioned to be less vocal about their sexual desires. Women more generally internalize it and say, 'Oh I must be doing something wrong.'" The truth is that all relationships, romantic or platonic, require some degree of “work” or “investment.” Being a good friend entails a willingness to do this work, and it’s ludicrous to expect sex in return. The friend zone pigeon holes us into having one thing to offer. Having a good friend is the appropriate reciprocity for being a good friend. The friend zone implies women are simply only good for sex.

When this kind of thing escalates from microaggressions to fatal violence: Elliot Rodgers became a mass shooter in Santa Barbara killing 7 people including himself. His manifesto stated he wanted to punish women for rejecting him and to punish men for having the life he claimed he deserved. And outbursts of violent masculinity, especially acts rooted in misogyny, are becoming more common, with almost half of the mass shootings happening in the last eight years, and seven in 2012 alone. Then there are the incidents that don't make national headlines, like the high school senior in Connecticut who stabbed to death a classmate who declined his invitation to prom. This scenario is connected with a broader movement of INCELS or involuntary celibates who blame women for their lack of sex.

Slide 12: There are higher rates of sexual harassment, sexual assault etc. toward people from communities that have experienced marginalization. For example, racism helps to contribute to a culture where people are made less human or objects. If someone views another race as less than, it makes it easier for a perpetrator to justify in their own minds abuse toward that person. Again, racist or homophobic name calling creates an atmosphere where human beings that are African American or Gay are seen as less than and therefore more deserving of abuse. What thoughts do you have about this? What connections do you see between isms and rape culture? Pause the recording here and write down your reflections.

END OF PART 1

Slide 12: (revisit) There are higher rates of sexual harassment, sexual assault etc. toward people from communities that have experienced marginalization. For example, racism helps to contribute to a culture where people are made less human or objects. If someone views another race as less than, it makes it easier for a perpetrator to justify in their own minds abuse toward that person. Again, racist or homophobic name calling creates an atmosphere where human beings that are African American or Gay are seen as less than and therefore more deserving of abuse.

Slide 13: We are going to look at how oppression and rape culture connect and why it is important for sexual assault advocates to have foundational knowledge in anti-oppression. It can help to take examples of oppression (in this case Anti-Black Racism) and locate parallels. In the other recorded

webinar, DIVERSITY, NON-DISCRIMINATION, CULTURAL COMPETENCY, ANTI-OPPRESSION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: Making Connections with Advocacy and the Experiences of Survivors we will look at intersections with disability.

Slide 14: The image on the right is Trayvon Martin. On the night of February 26, 2012, in Sanford, Florida, United States, George Zimmerman fatally shot unarmed Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old African-American high school student. He was returning from a convenience store where he bought an Arizona Ice Tea and a bag of Skittles. In the media, many wondered why he was wearing a hoodie (hood up), that it was cause for suspicion which lead to the murder. It was raining. Victim blaming culture asks

- Why was she wearing that skirt?
- Why was he wearing a hoodie?
- Why was she drinking so much?
- Why was he illegally selling cigarettes?

Slide 15: The picture on the left is BBQ Becky. She called the police on a group of black people who were legally barbecuing at a public park in Oakland, California. She was branded "BBQ Becky" and her image was photo-shopped into memes across the internet. She was just one is a string of episodes have been reported across the nation last year in which white people have called 911 to report black people generally going about their normal lives: napping, redeeming coupons, sitting at Starbucks, shopping, golfing, and many others not filmed or shared on social media that validates the experiences of Black Americans. This can be compared to sexism and rape culture— women and gender nonconforming being cat called or harassed doing everyday things. Rape & Racism are about Bodies. Rape & Racism are about Bodies. Our culture reinforces that That women and black folks' bodies do not belong to them, that they don't have authority or autonomy over their bodies. This ultimately Limits their ability to FULLY PARTICPATE IN SOCIETY.

Slide 16: Rape & Racism keep us from fully engaging in society. Rape Culture and Racism foster everyday fear— or as my colleague Tracy Wright says "everyday traumatic stress disorder".. Eve Ensler (the author of the Vagina Monologues) says, most women are busy spending their lives trying to prevent violence, survive violence, or heal from violence – they may not fully be participating in society. This also rings true for young black women in how they are taught from a very early age by their parents and families that they are in danger of being killed by police. Media shows black men being killed by police which reinforces the fear and cautious action. Whether or not it ever happens, whether or not they ever even interact with police, this fear is real, daily, and always present. This is similar to self-defense rape prevention efforts that tell women to not walk alone at night and to carry your keys between your fingers to stab potential rapists. Which, although completely absurd to approach rape prevention in this manner, is a message all women know extremely well. The feeling / the message in both these circumstances is "Not If but When". Again this brings us to the inevitability of sexual violence that creates rape culture. Living in fear means we are not self-actualizing, not reaching our full potential, not experiencing freedom and joy.

Slide 17: Rape & Racism take away our bodily autonomy. We have the right to give or take away our consent when it comes to our bodies. Full stop. No one should touch another without permission. Children should not be forced to hug a familiar member if they don't want. Women should not be

groped on subways. Black women should not have their hair touched by nonblack people feeling curious. As a white person, even by asking to touch a Black person's hair, I would be feeding into the narrative that (my) White hair is the norm and anything outside of it abnormal. When I indirectly assume that White hair is the default, I center myself and further the divide. Again, this is about Bodies. Our culture reinforces that That women and black folks' bodies do not belong to them, that they don't have authority or autonomy over their bodies and that we don't have access to what our bodies need- like birth control, clean water, abortion, fresh fruit and vegetables, healthcare, physical bodily safety, to be alive.

Slide 18: Rape Culture & Racism decides who has access to justice & who is believed. Black women and girls sit at the intersections of anti-black racism and sexism- this is often referred to as misogynoir. Black women disproportionately experience violence at home, at school, on the job, and in their neighborhoods. Black girls and women are more likely than any other group of people in America to become victims of sexual violence, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. Racial disparities pervade the educational and criminal justice systems. Black girls are suspended or expelled from public schools at much higher rates than other girls.

A 2017 study from the Center on Poverty and Inequity at Georgetown University Law School, found that Black girls are viewed by adults as more sexually mature than white girls, in the same peer group. This means when Black girls are victims of sexual assault, they are less likely to be believed because adults view them as older than they actually are. Black girls are robbed of their presumption of girlhood, innocence, and sexual virtue. This is problematic on a humanitarian level and carries a significant legal consequence.

In February 2019, R. Kelly was indicted and arrested on 10 counts of aggravated sexual abuse of four victims. After 25 years of fairly transparently abusing underage black girls. Surviving R. Kelly is a Lifetime documentary detailing sexual abuse allegations against American singer Robert "R." Kelly. It aired over three nights, from January 3 to January 5, 2019. Kelly's record label, RCA Records, dropped him shortly after the docuseries aired. On February 22, 2019, R. Kelly was formally charged with 10 counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse. A juror from R. Kelly's 2008 child pornography trial said he dismissed testimony from young Black girls simply because he didn't believe or like them. He flat out admitted to dismissing their accounts - The juror said he didn't like the way they looked, dressed, or sounded.

This lack of access to justice and believability of black women and girls is exploited by perpetrators.

In 2015 Daniel Holtzclaw, an Oklahoma Police Officer, was convicted of eighteen counts involving eight different women. Holtzclaw was accused of sexually assaulting multiple African American women over the period between December 2013 and June 2014, targeting those from a poorer, majority black portion of the city. According to the police investigators, Holtzclaw ran background checks on women with outstanding warrants or other criminal records, and methodically targeted those. The prosecution argued that victims were deliberately chosen by Holtzclaw for these reasons. Because they would not be believed if/when they came forward. The mainstream media gave Holtzclaw's trial for serial sexual attacks and rapes "relatively little" attention, although Black Lives Matter activists raised the matter in social media and helped bring attention to the ongoing judicial process. In the absence of national attention, two Oklahoma City women, formed the group OKC Artists For Justice to bring attention to the case. They said that they began to organize when Holtzclaw's bail was reduced from \$5 million to \$500,000 because it was so "insulting and infuriating", that they wanted to stand up and say NO. The

victims' stories need to serve as an important intervention in conversations about anti-black state violence, rape culture, and the vulnerability of sex workers, ex-offenders, and current and recovering drug addicts to state and state-sanctioned violence.

Slide 19: Intersectionality. Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the theory of intersectionality in 1989 in her paper written for the University of Chicago Legal Forum, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics". The main argument of this black feminist paper is that the experience of being a black woman cannot be understood in terms of being black and of being a woman considered independently, but must include the interactions between the two, which frequently reinforce each other. Crenshaw's focus on intersectionality is on how the law responds to issues that include gender and race discrimination. The particular challenge in law is that antidiscrimination laws look at gender and race separately and consequently African-American women and other women of color experience overlapping forms of discrimination and the law, unaware of how to combine the two, leaves these women with no justice. "Although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and anti-racist practices."

Slide 20: The history of rape in the United States is a history of racism and sexism intertwined. Rape was an important tool in white colonists' violent efforts to repress Native nations. During slavery, both white and black men raped black women with impunity. After the Civil War and during Reconstruction, white mobs lynched numerous black men based on trumped up charges of sexual assault of white women, and the specter of lynching terrorized the black community. Long before Rosa Parks became the "patron saint of the Bus Boycott", she was an anti-rape activist and investigator. Buses were sites of sexual and racial violence for Black women, who made up the majority of the riders. Buses became the target of Black activists' protests because they were the most visible vehicle of the system that abused African Americans daily. Organized, led and sustained by these very women, the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott was rooted in black women's demands for bodily integrity. Although the data is limited, many women of color are at greatest risk for rape. Only by aggressively addressing both racism and sexism will women of color and white women be able to obtain real justice for the sexual crimes suffered. From Recy Taylor to Anita Hill, and now Tarana Burke, founder of the #MeToo movement, Black women have been leading the Anti-Sexual Violence Movement. In general, understanding the multiple levels of oppression, the history, and the contributions of Black women can help advocates and programs consider more culturally relevant services, impacts of historical trauma, and intersectional approaches to our work.

Slide 21: This is the end of this lesson. Take a few minutes to write down some ways that rape culture manifests in everyday experiences. Think about when you were a kid at school and where you saw examples? What about in workplaces? In Media?

Reflect on sexual violence as it intersects with marginalized identities. We focused on the Black community here, what other communities do you see impacted in this way?

Bring your list with you to the first session of Core. And take care of yourself. This work is hard.

