



THE HARD CASE FACED

Rape and Abortion

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Rape is a terrible crime of violence against women. This appalling and destructive violation often leaves the victim severely damaged. Sometimes she is physically damaged. More often, emotionally. Anger, fear, guilt, disgust and loss of self-esteem will afflict her. This happens even when there is no pregnancy as a result of rape.

By its nature rape is a very emotional topic. It rightly evokes feelings of revulsion in the ordinary person, but this can lead to illogical and unfounded judgements with regard to pregnancy as a result of rape. Rape victims who are pregnant are offered the quick-fix solution of abortion. Is this what they really need?

PREGNANCY FROM RAPE IS EXTREMELY RARE

- The woman may be infertile at the time. She may be in the infertile phase of her monthly cycle, too old or too young to conceive
- The trauma of sexual assault is likely to inhibit ovulation
- Rape does not always involve a complete act of sexual intercourse
- Statistics worldwide show that the rate of pregnancy arising from sexual assault is 0.1%

Because pregnancy from rape is so rare, scant research is available on sexual assault and pregnancy. However, a study by Dr. Sandra Mahkorn entitled ***Pregnancy and Sexual Assault, New Perspectives on Human Abortion***, was the first of its kind in that it studied 37 pregnant rape victims in the U.S.A.

It produced startling findings which contradicted the commonly held belief that rape victims seek and need abortion. This study's findings supported the arguments on the facing page:

A Crude Solution

- Abortion is a quick-fix solution. Rape victims need long-term care and compassion. Society pretends that by killing the baby, it offers a solution to the assaulted woman. Abortion does not make you unpregnant - it makes you the mother of a dead baby. In Dr. Mahkorn's* study most sexual assault victims refused abortion.
- Abortion, by its nature intrusive and violent, is a second violation of the victim's body. It can produce the same kind of anger, fear, guilt, self-doubt that follows rape. For many women, abortion, like rape, is an experience they will never forget. Most women in Dr. Mahkorn's study felt that abortion was an act of violence and that issues relating to the rape experience, not the pregnancy, were of primary concern in counselling and rehabilitation.
- A UCD Prof. of Psychiatry Patricia Casey stated in 1992 that pregnancy reduces the risk of suicide in women by a factor of six. Expectant mothers are six times less likely to take their own lives. One reason is that a pregnant suicidal mother is usually unwilling to accept the responsibility for taking the child's life as well as her own.
- Abortion can also cause physical damage. It increases the chance of miscarriage and makes STD's, like chlamydia, worse. Infertility and increased risk of ectopic pregnancy may also occur.
- Abortion, acting as judge and jury, imposes a death sentence on an innocent child for the crime of her father. The baby is a newly-formed and distinct human being, and she is not to blame for the method of her conception. Why should he or she be victimised by being killed? Many women in Dr. Mahkorn's study spoke poignantly and courageously of their desire to protect the child in their wombs from such a brutal death.

* Sandra Mahkorn, "Pregnancy and Sexual Assault," *The Psychological Aspects of Abortion*, eds. Mall & Watts, (Washington, D.C.: University Publications of America, 1979), 55-69.

Towards Healing

- Women made pregnant by rape who do not abort say that hostile and negative feelings towards the baby change during pregnancy
- Some women have even abandoned their plans to have the baby adopted and decided to bring up the baby themselves
- Some pregnant rape victims have said that, at a subconscious level, if they go through with the pregnancy, they will have conquered the rape. Outlasting pregnancy shows they better than the rapist who brutalised them
- Abortion should never be considered as a treatment for incest, because it does not solve the underlying cause. In fact, the 'disposal' of the evidence of incest through abortion could subject the victim to continued exploitation
- Abortion in effect, becomes a convenient cover up for the crime and hinders the prosecution of the offender.



60a Capel Street, Dublin 1

T: 01 873 0463 F: 01 873 0464 E: info@youthdefence.ie W: www.youthdefence.ie