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"The Longest War" Guys and Rag Dolls: Male violence, rape, and control.

Rebecca Solnit's essay "The Longest War" gives voice to the extraordinary ordeal that is violence against women in context of the United States and the world. Solnit has crafted the presented information regarding violence and rape utilizing statistical, historical, factual, and personal views of gender and the inequality of predominately male violence toward females as compared to women's violence to men or women. The way in which her statistical, and numerical facts are presented provide credence to her statements of how this affects the way in which women perceive their surroundings.

Strong Intro

Solnit's makes this essay clearly convey the strong frequency and violence of rape by listing the details and frequency of rape and violence eight times within the first paragraph of the text. Solnit utilizes many examples of how rape is a gendered issue in the detailed accounts cited. Additionally, Solnit iterates staggering number of victims that fall prey to violence which lends us toward an engaging need to assess our world and the relations of the sexes and how this impacts our view on rape and violence.

great observation

good transition, flows well

Solnit's opens with shocking statistical information in the opening of the text, "there is a reported rape every 6.2 minutes, and one in five women will be raped in her lifetime" (Solnit 19) to provide us the basis for thought on the numbers involved in the essay. Then Solnit leads us directly into specific examples of rape where she summarizes the totality to state; "though no one adds them up and indicates that there might actually be a pattern" (Solnit 20) which indicates that we are being educated as this is an interesting viewpoint and needs to be explored. Solnit has

nice

definitively provided us with a great detail of information to quantify that women are the primary target of rape. The audience is any whom can affect change for the betterment of women to not be victimized by their male counterparts.

Solnit is not alone in reviewing the facts. Other journalists, scholars, and world organizations such as the United Nations validate the same type of persuasive information that rape and violence are not specifically tied to economic or wartime environments:

But violence against women — including rape, murder and sexual harassment — remains stubbornly high in countries rich and poor, at war and at peace. The United Nations' main health agency, the World Health Organization, found that 38 percent of women who are murdered are killed by their partners. (Sengupta)

However, there are differing views on this topic as to whether the aspect of violence and rape to women are as extreme as Solnit has expressed in regard to the aspect of violence specifically.

Solnit provides us the opinion;

“Women can and do engage in intimate partner violence, but recent studies state that these acts don't often result in significant injury, let alone death; on the other hand, men murdered by their partners are often killed in self-defense, and intimate violence sends a lot of women to the hospital and the grave.” (Solnit 21-22)

There is a level of degree that the most violent types of crimes are more severe toward women. Solnit does combine rape and violence, “We have an abundance of rape and violence against women in this country and on this Earth, though it's almost never treated as a civil rights or human rights issue.” There are differing opinions such as from Cathy Young's article, “Research showing that women are often aggressors in domestic violence has been causing controversy for almost 40 years, ever since the 1975 National Family Violence Survey by

← which ones?

good
Research
Backing
your
claims

sociologists Murray Straus" (Young). The issue of rape is unique unto itself and a different type of violence that has by its very nature a skewed demographic.

There were group assaults in 2012 from multiple locations of California, New Orleans, Chicago, and New Delhi which Solnit utilizes to depict the severity of gang rape and how terrible the violence of these assaults were. Solnit has provided us a very well documented and compelling argument that sexual violence against women is all too common. Additionally, Solnit provides options on how to review these incidents as she states, "If you'd rather talk about bus rapes than gang rapes" (Solnit 20). She is effectively directing us to pay heed to these instances as they become trends. Solnit's discourse advocates that the world take steps to educate those that would commit violent acts such as abuse and rape. Her arguments appeal to our sense of what is right and good, but let us not forget that even if we discount her appeals to the aspect of violence her informative expose as in where she directs us to the specific details that women of all generations and locations are subject to violence.

~~There's~~ There's so much of it. We could talk about the assault and rape of a seventy-three-year-old in Manhattan's Central park in September 2012, or the recent rape of a four-year-old and an eighty-three-year-old in Louisiana, or the New York City policeman who was arrested in October of 2012 for what appeared to be serious plans to kidnap, rape, cook, and eat a woman, any woman, because the hate wasn't personal. (Solnit, 22)

The facts of rape are disturbing. Hopefully with enlightenment and awareness, the world can reduce the conflict of the genders. Educating all to the staggering levels of violence directed toward women will help to reduce the risks and instance of this type of violent behavior. As women around the world become more equal to their male counterparts there may well be a shift

to where men are not predominantly approaching women, but where women are more comfortable of stepping beyond the normal role of a man's desire to be the individual that approaches a social exchange. "The fury and desire come in a package, all twisted together into something that always threatens to turn eros into thanatos" (Solnit, 27) may be lessened if we can take the role and make it equal for men and women.

This broaches the concept of toxic masculinity; worldwide, men must continually prove that they are men for the sake of being a man. Perhaps as many journalists have discovered, the way that we nurture our children may play a role in setting us up as perpetrator and victim from our earliest states of development.

* Statistically speaking, the number of addicted and afflicted men and their comparatively shorter lifespans proves masculinity is actually the more effective killer, getting the job done faster and in greater numbers. Masculinity's death tolls are attributed to its more specific manifestations: alcoholism, workaholism and violence. Even when it does not literally kill, it causes a sort of spiritual death, leaving many men traumatized, dissociated and often unknowingly depressed. (These issues are heightened by race, class, sexuality and other marginalizing factors, but here let's focus on early childhood and adolescent socialization overall.) (Holloway)

We don't hear discussions of toxic femininity very often. It seems as though since men typically repress their emotions and there are violent outlets for this repression. Rape is one of the most violent forms of these manifestations; perhaps if men act more as a person the acts of rape will lessen?


Rape and other acts of violence are well depicted and give much food for thought how there is a gender gap in the way that we view the world and the dangers therein. Men are often oblivious.

~~X~~ Last summer someone wrote to me to describe a college class in which the students were asked what they do to stay safe from rape. The young women described the intricate ways they stayed alert, limited their access to the world, took precautions, and essentially thought about rape all the time (while the young men in class, he added, gaped in astonishment). (Solnit 30).

Solnit makes clear that rape isn't specifically a crime of passion, but in many cases premeditated; "one of three Native American women will be raped, and on the reservations 88 percent of those rapes are by non-Native men who know tribal governments can't prosecute them."

To emphasize gender inequality, Solnit sites compelling comparisons of prominent figures; "Unlike the last (male) head of the International Monetary Fund, the current (female) head is not going to assault an employee at a luxury hotel" (Solnit 34), as well as the awful fact that in everyday life at home "there's just no maternal equivalent to the 11 percent of rapes that are by fathers or stepfathers." (Solnit 34)

Solnit starts the essay with the topic of rape and also of violence outside of rape. After an exploratory trip through all of the statistics, facts, and compelling arguments we end on the topic of rape. Rape and violence are linked, and making everyone aware is a laudable goal. Whether you believe that men are more violent than women, that the sides are balanced, or that women are more violent than men; the result is that although women are the primary target of rape is an



issue for all to heed. Violence is a human rights issue and whether we codify it as male or female, every effort should be made to alleviate the problem.

Works Cited

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As was already marked, you are missing a lot of quotations.