

MY STORY

On November 7, 1989 at approximately 10 p.m., I was raped in my own home. A young man broke into my apartment while I was watching T.V. I heard virtually nothing, no more than the regular sounds of wind against the doors, the windows and the shades. Nevertheless, he had entered my home. As a woman living alone I have always been fearful of sounds in the night and I often check to be sure that I am not just hearing things. This time, I waited a few minutes and then began to look around—just in case. I had never asked myself “in case” of what? That had been unthinkable. He hid among the shadows. As I breathed a sigh of relief turning off the light in my bedroom, having checked the bathroom (behind the shower curtain), the study, and finally my bedroom (the closet), he jumped out and attacked me.

I had never been physically attacked before. I did not know the power of fury and rage directed against me. As the world began to move in slow motion, (please let this be a dream, a nightmare), my mind was flooded with thoughts about all the attacks on women in Atlanta, the murders, rapes, and disappearances that happen daily! All of the terror I have experienced at night simply watching the eleven o'clock news and hearing about these stories was now brought into my home.

I screamed and I pleaded, I tried to bargain with my attacker. I offered him money, please not to hurt me. His words to me, his first and most chilling words, “**Give me some pussy. Give it to me.**” He wanted me. Not me as a person, not the PhD candidate, not the teacher, not the nice Jewish woman. No, he wanted my body, the body of any woman. He wanted a “pussy.” And he was violently and aggressively taking, as if it was his to take.

I fought back. I yelled and screamed which only served to provoke his anger and his rage against me. He began to choke me. He told me he would kill me as he tightened his grip around my neck. He meant it. I nearly passed out. After what seemed like an eternity of struggle, of escalating threats and violent beating, I stopped fighting for control of my body and concentrated on saving my life. I did not choose to be raped. I struggled to live. I took off my pants while he kept a tight hold on my neck. He threw me on the bed and raped me.²

While on the bed, I wanted to . . . I actually contemplated killing him, but had no weapon. The lamp near by was small and ineffectual. Had I used it, he only would have turned it against me. I wanted to survive and I wanted to be as intact as possible. I didn't want to be scarred further. I thought of Marla Hanson³ and I was afraid. I wanted this man to die. Most of the time this was happening, I was almost chanting the phrase, “please, please, please don't hurt me, please, please, please don't hurt me.” He couldn't have cared less. I was increasingly afraid of becoming yet another woman killed by one of countless violent, nameless, men in Atlanta. I did not want to die.

He called me stupid, he raged at me. He told me that since I would not shut up, he would have to kill me. He repeated these words many times. And the anger, the rage behind these words only escalated. On the bed, as I continued to try and hold him back, he slapped me harder and then tightened his grip around my neck. Throughout the rape,⁴ like so much bad

Speaking Out of the Silence around Rape

A Personal Account

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television, like so many bad movies, his words were familiar. Phrases I have heard and continue to hear daily accompanied his violent acts. They exacerbated his actions. These words still echo in my head. They were the words of my culture, a culture that I have come to believe, hates women. He used these words, the words that objectify woman daily and package us into products on T.V., in films, and in all too many T.V. commercials and advertisements, to rationalize his aggression towards me.

SILENCES

WORDLESSNESS

Some of what I hate most about what happened to me is the easy accessibility of these words, these images of women. My attacker was able to readily articulate his rage. He had our shared culture to give words to his violence.

The injustice in all of this is that now, even months later, I have so few words to speak about my rape from my own perspective. As a woman in this culture I am voiceless. The words out there are not only not my own, they are hostile towards me. **"He raped me,"** to what does this refer? The whole experience was a violation. How do I differentiate between the moment he entered my apartment, his surprise attack, his choking hold, his words, his verbal abuse, and his sexual violation of my body? All of this is rape. What do I call each piece of this scenario? The terms I have, including "rape" itself, are objectifying. To demonstrate this point let me give some examples.

After having written this piece, it was suggested that I be more precise about what happened, what he did, what I did, his hands, etc. In my many attempts to do so, I found myself without words. For as I wrote down what happened, I felt betrayed, violated. To say, for example, that **"he entered me"** is a problem. It feels wrong. It makes me think of doors and I do not feel like a door. I am not a point of entry nor am I an exit. Not only that, I resent having to speak about myself in these terms. So I have not. Another example, to say that **"he took me"** is again objectifying. I am not a piece of property to be acquired. And yet these are the common words we have in this culture to speak about sexuality. And they are the only words we have to speak about sexual assault.

This raises yet another problem about sexual assault. It has become popular to think and to speak about rape as a crime of violence and not of sex. I hate the dichotomy. Rape is both. The reason many survivors of sexual assault find this distinction comforting however tells us how far this culture is from being able to address the problem of sexual assault. When rape was simply understood as a part of heterosexuality, an acceptable form of sex, the crime against women was invisible. To call rape an act of violence was a kind of reversal of that notion of acceptability. It helped, and continues to help, a lot of women and men in this culture recognize that sexual assault is a crime. For me the reversal is no longer enough, I am concerned about the fact that my attacker was sexually aroused by this particular violent act.⁵ For the rapist, sex and violence are integrally bound. To deny that is to see only part of the problem. Furthermore, this connection between sex and violence is culturally reinforced on a daily basis. Indeed, heterosexuality, as it has been constructed in our culture, is extremely violent.⁶ And yet, for now, this very obvious connection remains obscure by both our language and the power dynamics that keep women "in their place," in

an inferior position vis-à-vis men. What concerns me is that in all of this, sexual violence remains unnamed as such. In order to protect myself, therefore, I have chosen to have this discussion about language instead of attempting to be more precise using other people's (men's) words about the specifics of my rape.

He told me **"to spread my legs"** How many times have we heard men say these words to women without their consent? He told me **"to act like I liked it,"** his hand around my neck ready to choke me for not "complying." **"Complying"**—yet another example of my own lack of words. This makes me furious. While there are whole vocabularies for men to abuse women, I have to talk about "complying" with my attacker. The word signifies some kind of consent. There was none. My life was at stake. Thus, part of the whole process, the whole violation, is this problem of language. I have to talk about consent as if I had a real choice.

How do we express our desires as women in this culture? How are we heard or silenced in our attempts to say what we do or do not want? What we are told in the media, in various ways day in and day out, is that when we say "no" we really mean "yes." How can we begin to speak of consent in this context? I reiterate, when I or any other woman say "no," we mean "no," no consent. If we could just assume that, we would be making progress. For now, however, even a simple and straight forward word like "no" goes unheard when we speak it. Our **"no"** does not carry the same weight as when a man utters this same word. When we say it, the meaning is understood to be unclear, contradictory, indeed to have the opposite connotation.

I was raped on November 7, 1989. My rape was a "real rape."⁷ A strange man broke into my home and attacked me. Somehow I thought that this kind of rape has already been talked about, already been dealt with by all of the countless women involved in rape crisis hotlines, groups, and women's shelters. I thought that there were already countless books by feminists dealing with the pain, the politics, and the trauma of stranger rape. In fact I have the feeling that no one wants to talk about this kind of rape anymore. There are other kinds of rape which especially on college campuses, like the one where I teach and study, are more pressing, more newsworthy. There is a need to find words to describe these newly acknowledged forms of rape, acquaintance rape and rape within marriage. I am not angry at those who want to talk about these kinds of rape. I am among those who want to add such words to our cultural vocabulary. I devoted much classroom time to two incidents on our campus last spring,⁸ because I do believe it is important. I also think it is important to talk about child sexual abuse and incest. My reason for bringing all of these things up here is to make a different point, a point about **"assumptions."**

I just read Ely Bulkin's, *Enter Password: Recovery, Re-enter Password*, a painful but helpful book about recovery from child sexual abuse and the pain of breaking up from a long-term relationship. Yet, even here, I felt my own absence as a survivor of rape. Early on in the text, Bulkin refers to something she calls "rape trauma"⁹ without explanation. She assumes understanding. I cannot. Nor can I let it go because I feel betrayed by such assumptions. I do not know what "rape trauma" is. Yet, like Bulkin, I too assumed that there was some knowledge out there about rape already and I have been deeply disappointed because I have discovered that there is no such understanding. There is, as of yet, still too little written about what rape has meant for those of us who have survived. Our experiences are still surrounded by silence.

When I went to the National Women's Studies Association, (NWSA), conference this year,¹⁰ this point became clearer. At the conference, I looked through aisles of feminist books for such a literature on rape, to no avail. What I found instead were books that advise women on how to avoid rape. I felt accused by such volumes; they made me feel like it was somehow my fault because I did not successfully avoid being raped. (There is a thin line here between other people telling women how to avoid being raped and those of us who have been raped urging other women to be careful acknowledging that, sometimes these things may be out of our control). Others tell professionals how to treat us, survivors of rape. Few were even addressed to us much less written by us. I still want to hear the voices of other women like me; and the fact most of us have yet to speak, demands that assumptions about us be radically rethought.

I also learned something else at this conference: not only is there little written about the experience of rape, there is also little knowledge about how to treat us as we become more public, more vocal about our experiences. This became painfully clear to me at NWSA. Here too I made an assumption. I thought that feminists, of all people, would know how to respond to me as a survivor of rape speaking out. I was wrong. I assumed that, at least among feminists, there was some kind of understanding about what it means to speak out about rape and about how to do so in a social setting, in a group. Some of the women I met at NWSA, were involved in women's shelters. Even these advocates and activists did not seem to know how to approach me. Don't get me wrong, some individual women in the group where I spoke out¹¹ were very nice to me. The problem was the group. Here I felt silenced. I felt like an outsider. I experienced the group's discomfort as a rejection. I felt as if, by saying I had been raped, I had interrupted group process and not been a part of it. In other words, I was not sure that it had been alright for me to bring up the issue.¹²

For now I want to talk about one aspect of this problem of community, not just among feminists. I want to raise some of my own concerns about expectations. My sense is that the very notion of community has become romanticized. What I mean by this is that community has become associated with all kinds of unrealistic expectations about instant gratification and instant connection. There is in this no real appreciation for the difficult work that goes into building and sustaining human community. It is often as a result of such expectations that many of us deny the good things we do get from the people closest to us. We deny our own communities.

When I listened to feminists talk about recovery as in Bulkin's book, I am left wondering about my own experience. My recovery feels so different.¹³ My community of close friends and colleagues have listened to me, have stayed with me at night. I am still afraid to stay at

home alone despite my too-expensive electronic alarm system with beeper, my mace, and my large loveable dog—a post-rape addition to my family.¹⁴ My friends have been with me as much as they can, but the rape is still mine alone. It isolates me and I hate this isolation. Many of the books I have read over the years talk glowingly about the power of groups, of "women hearing each other's stories."¹⁵ Perhaps I am of another generation of feminists, a generation after consciousness-raising groups, but even when I did go to a survivors' group¹⁶ I did not feel the kinds of warm and glowing feelings of connectedness that many of these feminists write about. I did not have that experience in my group. I felt our differences keenly. We were not an instant community despite the fact that each of us had been raped.

From the beginning, I chose to speak out about my rape. I told my parents and had them tell other relatives and family friends. I had friends and colleagues tell other friends and colleagues. Everyone in my department at the university knew and I told my students when I came back a week and a half after the rape. I told them myself in class. I just had to do these things. At the time I was not sure why. Over time, with the help of my therapist, I have come to realize why this has been, and continues to be, so important to me. I want to protect the people I know and love, my family, my friends, my students, and my colleagues. I want them all to do what they can to protect themselves. Many of my friends and colleagues now carry mace and have put extra locks on their doors. This feels good. It feels safer at least for them. But I needed to speak out for another reason that is not so much about them as it is about me. I have needed to speak out for myself as a way of being heard in my pain, in my fear, my anger, and my hurt. By speaking out I have been freer to be myself to have my feelings and to not have to pretend that everything is OK when it clearly isn't.

Among my closest friends this has been the case. I have been heard but as I have attempted to expand my audience, as I have attempted to speak to people less close to me, this has not been so simple, and in fact, I have often felt re-victimized in these very attempts to help others and to be heard. What happens, as in the rape itself, and this is a major reason why this is so terribly painful for me to have to deal with, is that I feel once again all alone. I feel like I am screaming into a void. No one hears my pain, no one sees me. This is in fact what I have been wanting to write about but as I sat down to write all the other stuff came pouring out first. Now that I am here I want to be very clear about what it means to "speak out" about having been raped. To speak out is, at least for me, a cry for acknowledgment. I want to be seen, not as a brave woman, not as courageous, not as a victim, I want to be seen in my multiple identities. I am all of these things as a survivor: frightened, angry, strong, vulnerable, and brave. Sometimes when we are strong this seems to cancel out the fact that we are also terribly frightened. For other

women these kinds of things may be reversed or the terms themselves may be different. What I want is a clear sense of my own complexity. I am afraid of having to be OK too soon. I want my friends and family to know that I hurt and that despite my strength, I am very tired.

My story when I told it to those outside my community, was met with a deadening silence. I agreed to let my name be used in a newspaper story about the failures of 9/11. While I was being raped, my landlord called 911. She first heard a recording and later was put on hold. When she finally got through and told them a violent crime was in progress, the police did rush to get here. They arrived too late to protect me. I had already escaped on my own. I ran out of the house and phoned them again myself before they arrived. The police neither prevented the sexual assault nor caught my attacker.

I did not expect people to fix things for me, to change 9/11 and make it work more effectively. I wanted them to tell me that they had seen me. This I mean literally. When I told my friend Jill about the article and the fact that virtually no one mentioned it to me,¹⁸ she told me a story about her mother. A friend of the family had come to spend a weekend at their lake house and had made everyone uncomfortable at breakfast by talking about her therapy. Jill's mother wanted advice on how to deal with this personal information. Jill told her mother to tell her friend that she was glad that she likes her therapist. "Just let her know that you heard her," Jill told her mother. I love Jill. Her advice was simple and to the point. It was all that I had wanted. Say anything, I wanted to shout, just let me know that you heard me, saw me. Let me know that you know I was raped.

There have been many instances over the last six months that have reminded me of this point. My words are for us, those of us who have been raped as well as for those who have not. I want to tell you what my experience has been and how I have felt since the incident. I also want to tell you what I want from those who hear me. I never expected that I would feel the need to tell others how to respond to me. But my experience has proved the necessity of my having to write about these things. I had no one to turn to do this for me. I now see that even among feminists where my expectations were highest, there is a need for such a statement.

Originally I was going to write this essay in a very orderly manner. I was simply going to write about silence and present four examples, NWSA, the newspaper article, and two other examples. But what I have discovered in writing all of this is that there are many different and often contradictory silences around rape and they don't all fit into neat categories and orderly modes of presentation.¹⁹

THE COMPLEXITIES OF LIVING IN THE MIDST OF SILENCE

I am still talking about silence but now want to focus on the complexity of the problems I have encountered in living with speaking out. This is where my two final examples fit in. What I want to show in these cases is how difficult it has been for me to make myself heard. What I mean by this is that there are many different and contradictory ways in which speaking out about rape has made me invisible. What I mean by this is that I have had to struggle not to be reduced into a caricature of myself. What is striking about these encounters is that they are not with people out there in the world who I do not know but rather

with friends and family. The first example is about my first visit back "home" to Dover, Delaware, the small town where I grew up and where my parents still live. The second is about a telephone conversation with an old friend.

I had my parents tell friends in Dover about my rape. At the time, I heard from a few of them, mostly notes through the mail. I had also conveyed through my parents that I was too tired to talk on the phone. When they saw me I got a few hugs and then the same old talk. How attractive I looked, compliments about what I was wearing or how I interacted with the young children who were there. I had come home for an art opening my brother was having. Face to face, no one mentioned the rape, though everyone there had been told. I was stunned. I had been afraid that the rape would usurp my identity among them, that there would have been talk of nothing else. I was wrong. No one said a word. In the end, I was grateful to the one woman who saw me. She saw that I was tired, recovering from the rape and in the midst of my doctoral exams. She recognized my exhaustion. It was the closest thing to an understanding and acknowledgment of my vulnerability that I received from any of these people.

What I felt instead from everyone else was the reverse. I was somehow so strong, so brave, that I really could get through anything. This was not how I felt and not how I wanted to be seen and it hurt. I wish some one could have said, "I'm sorry" or, "How are you feeling?" Anything to acknowledge they heard me to my face and not to each other behind my back.

My friends who work for the newspaper tell me that in a recent workshop on reporting about rape,²⁰ everyone talked about the "stigma" . What I want to say to them is, "Where do you think the stigma comes from? You stigmatize me by not looking at me, by not hearing me." I want you to acknowledge what happened to me. "Tell me that you think that it was horrible and not me. Don't protect me by your silence. If I wanted your silence I would never have spoken out to begin with." I want to be heard. As Audre Lorde reminds us, silence does not protect anyone.²¹ It has certainly not protected me. To scream and be heard is what I long for. I speak out to protect other women and to protect myself from the devastation of your silence, a silence which only serves to further isolate me.

My final example. I spoke to an old friend, a high school friend, one of the few with whom I still feel some connection. When I told her about the rape two things happened. First she seemed puzzled by my pain, my hurt and continued trauma. She paused, "Well, that's too bad but what do you want me to say?—it happens all the time. I know lots of other women who have been raped." I felt deflated. Somehow to her, rape did not seem to warrant such an emotional response. In order to justify myself, I had to somehow convince her that my life was in danger, which

it was, but what I wanted was for her to understand that the rape was bad enough.

I don't think she meant to belittle what had happened to me, but this was how I experienced her initial response. Over the course of our conversation we got closer, but what I want to talk about is the distance. Like the people in Dover, ultimately Tracy also ended up making me into a kind of hero. She told me how brave I was. And to solidify this point, she told me about some of the other women she knew in the Peace Corp who had been raped (that's right, the Peace Corp. what they don't tell you about what happens out there in the world). She said that a few of these women who had been raped were able to take their experience of victimization and use it to fuel important and radical political work in the Peace Corp especially in relation to violence against women. That was all well and good but what I couldn't say to Tracy was that I felt for these women. I knew that it was not simply enough that they had been strong, that they had become political and done good radical work. They had suffered. They had pain and anger and fears that could not be erased by their political efforts. Like me, they may be brave and strong but they also hurt and they were also vulnerable. I wanted to tell Tracy that it doesn't simply go away if one is strong. Like these women, I too am both strong and very vulnerable. See me in my complexity. Don't reduce me to some kind of courageous puppet. I have many identities even as a survivor. The painful reality of seeing this complexity is that it leaves the viewer, the person who has not been raped, that much more vulnerable herself. She cannot take comfort in my really being ok. She cannot say it all worked out for the best because that is only a partial truth. It does and it doesn't all work out.

One final point about a similar phenomenon and that is the notion that one "recovers" and is eventually all right again after a rape. It has only been six months and I have had lots of recovery but I am not the same. And the rape does not simply go away. To be a survivor of a sexual assault is to live with the memory of what has happened. It is a part of my life. Unlike you who have not gone through it, my closest friends, my lover, my therapist, and my family, you all can put it aside. It is not constantly a part of your very being in the same way that it is for me. In this, I am and will always be alone with my particular pain. As I write these words I have paused. Am I alone? There are countless other women who have been sexually abused, who have been raped on account of our culture. To them I want to say, "We are not completely alone." I hope that in writing this there will be other women who will be able to identify with many of the things I have said. I do not expect them to talk to me. They have too much work already to do.

My gift to them is this essay. I hope that they can, if it is useful to them, give it to their good friends and family as a way to help those closest to them understand. I do not want to pretend to have an instant community with any one including other survivors of rape. I ask only to be heard in my particularity. And since I have the gift of speech, since I am an academic, this feels like something I can do not only for myself but for the women in my support group who still have close friends and family who don't know that they were raped. This is for all those women who are afraid to speak. I don't blame them, it has hurt me to do so. I still get lost and continue to struggle to be heard in the midst of all these silences.

NOTES

1. Atlanta, Georgia is the crime capital of the United States with the overall highest crime rate. The 11 o'clock news in Atlanta is frightening. There are nightly reports about women who are missing, who have been raped, attacked and brutalized. When a woman is missing in Atlanta the chances are that she is already dead. The names of these women are countless.

2. "He raped me." This statement is problematic in that my understanding of "rape" is that the whole assault was rape, but because we have so few words to talk about these things in ways that are not violent, not self-objectifying, I have at times referred to the sexual aspect of my assault, as in this instance, as rape.

3. Maria Hanson is the ex-New York model whose face was brutally slashed by her landlord. She is now an advocate for survivors of sexual assaults and has recently testified in Washington, D.C. in support of the Biden Bill on Crimes against Women, June 20, 1990.

4. "Throughout the rape," refers to the whole assault and not simply the sexual assault.

5. See Catharine A. MacKinnon, "Sexuality, Pornography and Method: Pleasure under Patriarchy," *Ethics* 99:2 (Jan. 1989), 314-346.

6. I am a heterosexual woman involved in an ongoing heterosexual relationship, a relationship that has had to struggle with the trauma of rape. I think that it is possible to survive rape and to sustain loving relationships with men but that it is difficult. I hope to write about some of these difficulties and especially the violence surrounding heterosexuality in this culture at length in a future essay.

7. "Real rape" is a term I have taken from Susan Estrich to refer to stranger rape where the victim's life is clearly in danger. Speaking about her own rape, Estrich writes "...the most important thing is that he was a stranger; that he approached me not only armed but uninvited; that he was after my money and car, which I surely don't give away lightly, as well as my body. As one person put it: "You really didn't do anything wrong." Susan Estrich, *Real Rape* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 3. For more information about the full range of sexual violence against women, see also Liz Kelly's, *Surviving Sexual Violence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), and Susan Griffin, *Rape: The Politics of Consciousness* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979).

8. During the Spring semester of 1990 on the Emory University Campus there were two reported incidents of rape that took place on the same evening. The incidents created much heated debate on campus. In one case a Black man was accused of raping a Black woman, not a student at Emory. He was charged and his case went to trial. The other incident involved a white man, the president of the inter-fraternity council, a senior applying to Medical School. The charges against this student were dropped when the victim involved a white undergraduate at Emory, was convinced that her case would not hold up in court. The alleged assailant is presently a first year medical student, not at Emory.

9. Ely Bulkin, *Enter Password, Re-enter Password* (Albany, NY: Turtle Books, 1990), 12.

10. The National Women's Studies Association, NWSA, Twelfth Annual Conference, University of Akron, Akron, OH, June 20-24, 1990.

11. NWSA, The Jewish Women's Caucus, pre-conference meeting, University of Akron, Akron, OH, June 19, 1990.

12. Although my experience this time was with this particular group of women, this issue of community is not a problem for just this group, it is a much broader problem for various feminist communities. The problem is how to maintain the intimacy of an established group while welcoming new members, especially those of the next generation, so that they may help carry on the "traditions" of the group. I can only touch on this dilemma here. I hope to more fully explore this problem, first among various groups of Jewish feminists, in a future essay.

13. This may be just my reading of Bulkin's book. As she has told me even for her, there is a tremendous struggle for community. "I have been in far too many groups to expect much of any of them. When they work, I'm as surprised as anyone else." Unpublished, private correspondence, Summer 1990.

14. I got my dog, Bleiben from the Atlanta Humane Society on Nov. 15, 1989. His name comes from the German verb "bleiben," to stay, to remain, to endure. He was a lost dog. Together we have endured.

15. Consciousness-raising was an important and indeed a central component to the beginnings of the second wave of American feminism. The idea was to hear other women and ourselves into consciousness. This was done in small groups of primarily white middle-class women with similar concerns. Although limited by issues of class, race, language, and ethnicity this process of hearing women into speech has been used effectively by African-American, Latina, and even Jewish feminists among ourselves. The issue for me is what to do with difference(s). How do feminists deal with what we do not have in common? How do we hear the pain, the anger between us?

16. The group I attended was sponsored by Cobb County Rape Crisis. It was an eight week finite group. We were eight women from all over the metropolitan area. This was one of the only groups to meet in the Atlanta area from November to February 1989-90. I drove almost thirty miles each week to get to this group. There were no closer groups meeting at that time. Another group was just beginning to form for the first time in DeKalb County as my group was meeting.

17. Douglas Lavin, "As 911 Use Rises, More Callers to Lifeline Put on Hold," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, Sunday May 27, 1990, front page. 911 did not come to my rescue as it does nightly on syndicated T.V. or on CBS, "Rescue 911." Like so many police shows, there is a vast difference between television and what actually happens in the cities and towns of the United States day in and day out. These programs work to deny the actual brutal realities of crime in this country. Most crimes are neither stopped nor resolved by the police. Instead of facing up to this disturbing fact, these T.V. shows seduce us into believing that we are safe, that we are protected when, in fact, we are not.

18. One of the most honest and telling responses I had to the article was from a woman I swim with. In the locker-room as we showered she asked, "You aren't the woman in the paper, are you?" She didn't want this to have happened to me, to someone that she knew. It was hard for me to say yes, but it was also a relief. Her asking told me that she had seen me. And the fact that she used a negative construction told me a few things: 1) It told me how difficult it is to acknowledge that rape does not simply happen to women "out there" but to women we know; 2) It also showed me that she cared about me. The negative construction was an attempt to protect me from even the possibility of having had this experience. "It wasn't you, was it?" Although I was moved by this particular response, my experience over all was that even this woman's attempt to protect me as an individual pointed to the social problem of rape. The idea that it is better for an anonymous woman "out there" to get raped as opposed to me, is not acceptable. The problem of rape is not which women are raped but that women are raped at all. Rape should not be treated as inevitable.

19. In response to a suggestion that I somehow make this essay more orderly, clearer, I quote Irena Klepfisz: "I see value in retaining the knots we experience in articulating concepts and theories. In the process of creating the

"seamless," (i.e. orderly), essay, we sometimes smooth over those lumpy intersections which need to be highlighted because they are an integral part of the issues we are examining. In saying this, I am not advocating bad or careless or irresponsible writing, but rather the notion that form and content are determined by our spiritual and material circumstances. By retaining the difficult process by which we reach conclusions (through digressions, free association, interruptions, new beginnings, reiteration) we endow ideas with a three-dimensional reality which makes them accessible and operative in the world. To what degree this is true and the method effective, readers will judge for themselves." Irena Klepfisz, *Dreams of An Insomniac: Jewish Feminist Essays, Speeches, and Diatribes* (Portland: Eighth Mountain Press, 1990), xiii.

20. The rape workshop I am referring to was facilitated by Rebecca Perl and Betsy White, staff writers at *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* in May 1990. The workshop was in-house among staff reporters and focused on the series of articles published in the *De Moines Register* about Ms. Nancy Ziegenmeyer. Ms. Ziegenmeyer agreed to tell her story to the newspaper in explicit detail and to use her name. (Ms. Ziegenmeyer's courageous act encouraged me to tell my story as part of the 911 article in *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*. See note #18.) I learned about this workshop from Rebecca Perl in a series of informal conversations.

21. Audre Lorde, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," *The Cancer Journals* (San Francisco: Spinster/Aunt Lute, 1980), 18-23.

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