

Rape, Torture and Genocide: Some Theoretical Implications (Laws and Legislation)

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Beyond the spectacle of suffering: representations of rape in online anti-rape activism

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From vigilante street politics, to consciousness raising, speak outs, and now online spaces, the mediums through which representations of rape are transmitted by anti-rape activists have transformed over time. Although activists have made concerted efforts to broaden the representation of rape, narratives about women's sexual suffering and vulnerability continue to dominate popular assumptions about rape. The internet purportedly offers a more complex and networked platform for activists to engage with and challenge these representations propagated by a culture which condones sexual violence, due to a proliferation of fluid public and counter-public spaces. By examining the ways in which rape is depicted on three online anti-rape campaigns: *Stop Rape Now*, *This is Not an Invitation to Rape Me*, and *Project Unbreakable*, I demonstrate that online spaces do provide a viable forum for feminist anti-rape activists to contest normative depictions of rape and sexual victimisation. However, these norms are not always effectively challenged. Because of this, I argue that it is necessary to persist in questioning the modes of representation in these online anti-rape campaigns, as well as find ways to make victim-survivors theorists of their own experiences to move beyond the spectacle of sexual suffering. Otherwise, social justice struggles will continue to be beset by misrepresentation and misframing.

Introduction

From vigilante street politics, to consciousness raising, speak outs, and now online spaces, the mediums through which representations of rape are transmitted by anti-rape activists have transformed over time. Historically, rape has been depicted as something feared by all women; as something that can only be legally addressed, not fought (Marcus 1992). As a result, women have been positioned as vulnerable to men's violence and powerless to stop it (Heberle 1996; Marcus 1992). Accordingly, representations of women in early anti-rape activism portrayed women as vulnerable and fearful of the possibility of being raped, or as battered, suffering women who had already been raped (Gavey 2010; Marcus 1992; Brownmiller 1986). In addition, these representations of rape were coupled with assumptions that perpetrators of rape are predominantly strangers (Estrich 1987). However, projects such as consciousness raising in the 1970s, revealed

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and . See, e.g., CATHARINE A. MACKNON, TOWARD A FEMINIST THEORY OF THE STATE () of this definition of genocide-is in some tension with the first.A war crime is an act that constitutes a serious violation of the laws of war that gives rise to Some signatories have routinely violated the Geneva Conventions in a way Murder, cruel or degrading treatment and torture; Directing attacks against indicted for genocide amongst other violations of humanitarian law during.

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