

opinion
READER

Rape is abusive

In response to Mr. Goering's letter (DN, Oct. 17), the line between sex and rape is anything but fine. Sexual intercourse taken on its most basic and unemotional level is genital contact. Rape is the act of physically forcing a woman to have sexual intercourse -- a physical and violent act. The most destructive aspect of rape is not the sex, which Mr. Goering repeatedly referred to, but the physical and emotional abuse. How can one ask to be raped if the act of rape inherently involves the use of force? The necessity of force hardly suggests a mutual decision.

I could walk down the street naked and appear to be looking for sex, but I am not asking to be raped.

Lastly, the United States court of law is not an institution that passes judgment on the morality of a person. The court system was established to protect the rights and freedom of every individual, moral or immoral, willing to have sex or not, with underwear or without. Rape is a physical violation of a woman's body and mind. It is not merely sex, and it's never asked for.

Jennifer Sinor
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English/Russian

Rape attitudes are 'dangerous'

Having read the letter by Ross Goering (DN, Oct. 17) about the Florida rape trial, I found the attitudes expressed dangerous, and a refutation therefore in order.

Several points are worthy of note. First, rape can never, ever be justified under any circumstances. Just because the Florida woman chose to wear clothing which was apparently revealing does not confer to every Tom, Dick or Harry a privilege to violate that woman. Even if she was interested in sex, doesn't she still have a right to at least select a partner?

Mr. Goering suggests that if a woman is dressed provocatively, a man can infer consent to have sex or at least justify raping her. This argument is beneath contempt. It suggests that rape is the fault of the victim (a problem rape victims have enormous trouble dealing with anyway) while freeing the man of accountability. It perpetuates the myth that women are constantly aroused, always want it and mean "yes" when they say "no." And it lends itself to infinitely broad application. For example, I take a first date back to her apartment, she submits to my wandering

hands and whammo, she has caused me to be aroused. Ergo, I am now justified in "consummating the relationship" despite any protestations? Rubbish, yes, but a logical extension of Goering's argument.

Worse yet, Goering suggests that some women provoke their own rapes. The legal principle on this is unequivocal. The law does not recognize provocation as a defense to rape. To do so would be nonsensical.

Second, there is no question of whether the Florida woman was raped. Goering suggests that her provocative dress was a manifestation of assent to have sex with whomever decided to initiate sex; that a court of law would find her a consenting party to the act. Goering is, of course, very much mistaken.

A law enforcement officer on the scene testified that he believed she was raped at knifepoint. Further, the jurors themselves described the act as a rape. Her lack of consent was not the issue, her lack of underwear clearly was. Yet, according to Goering, "anyone with half a brain" could see she would be a willing partner to sex. While it may be true that people with only half of their brains intact feel this way, I would argue that this is an attitude possessed primarily by those people whose half-brains lie between their testes.

Finally, contrary to what Mr. Goering suggests, there is no fine line between "looking for sex" and rape. In fact, the distinction is quite clear. With the former, consent exists. With the latter it does not. What qualifies as consent is only slightly less clear. Consent to go out to dinner is not de facto consent to have sex later. Consent to "heavy petting" is not de facto consent to anything more. Most importantly, consent, once given, can be revoked at any time.

Greg Coffey
first year
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Jury misplaces blame for rape

Ross Goering asks (DN, Oct. 17), "Who says?" I think if you asked any rational person, male or female, they'll say that the jury in Florida made a mistake -- one that unfortunately will perpetuate the current violent and abusive treatment of women in this society.

You say that this woman asked for it by the way she was dressed. It doesn't matter what the hell this or any woman wears, it does not con-

done any type of abusive behavior whether it be verbal, physical or sexual. I can't believe this line of reasoning.

I'm also really sick of men justifying this and other forms of violent behavior by claiming that women "ask for it," or deserve it and other ridiculous logic. Wake up! No one is willing or deserves to be violated as a physical person but more importantly as a human being.

The most unfortunate result of the Florida case, if there can be one most unfortunate, is that it clears the way for future acts of rape and violence against women without punishment or even legal or moral recognition. Furthermore it inaccurately places the blame of a rapist's acts on the victim, misconstruing the facts about sexual roles and relationships and will give the signal to rapists and all males that this behavior is recognized and justified.

Lisa Weems
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English education

Lack of attire not grounds for attack

In response to the letter by Ross Goering (DN, Oct. 17), she was asking for the rape because of how she was dressed? For one thing, rape is not a sexual act motivated by desire, it is a violent act motivated by hatred. Yet since Ross appears to believe that it is sexual, let's assume it is for the sake of argument.

Does that mean the next time you're on the beach, Ross, or playing a sport on a hot summer day without your shirt, a woman (or man) can attack you and do whatever she or he wants to your body because of your attire or lack of? After all, you are half naked and wearing skimpy little shorts. "You are advertising your body." You obviously want sex and don't care with whom.

Maybe you wouldn't mind being attacked by, say, Meg Ryan or Madonna but not by someone you may think looks like a stereotypical Russian athlete. My point is that the choice should be yours.

Perhaps this woman was looking for some affection through sex -- yet not with the man who attacked her. Sex gained through mental coercion or physical force is rape, and this woman, whom authorities testified was held at knifepoint, was raped.

Unfortunately, there are still ignorant people out there like Ross Goering who have perpetuated such asinine and outrageous court rulings as

this.
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Acts of violence are unacceptable

This letter is in response to Ross Goering's letter (DN, Oct. 17) about the Florida rape victim, stating that the woman deserved to be raped.

First of all, I would like to say to you and the reading audience that I am embarrassed. And why? Because Mr. Goering, I am now one of the unfortunate individuals who has to admit that you graduated from my high school. And worse yet, from my class.

Since when has an act of violence been taught to be accepted?

If I mend a bird's broken wing, I do not expect it to peck at me. When I tell a friend that I care, I do not expect to be slapped in the face. If I am out on a quest for peace, should somebody kill me? In the same sense, the woman may have been looking for love, and a pleasure in life.

But if you think that a woman enjoys being forced upon while somebody is punching her face and cutting her repeatedly, well, buddy, I pity your dates.

And tell me one thing, Ross: If your sister or close friend or relative came to you in the middle of the night, battered, bleeding and bruised, and told you she had been raped . . . would you hold her gently in your arms and comfort her by saying, "Now, now. It's OK. Everything will be all right. But . . . you did deserve this."

What kind of man are you, Ross? I thought that when a woman says no, she means no. It's just that simple. If a man crosses that line, then he's not a man at all. Or is it that you don't want to admit that women do say no to you?

Ross, you sicken me.

Patrick Lambrecht
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Rape isn't among human freedoms

What basic rights do we have? The freedom of speech. The freedom of religion. The right of choice. The right to form our own opinion. These among other rights are what makes

me proud to live in this country. Along with these rights are simple rights of walking the way we want, smiling the way we want, going where we want and, yes, dressing the way we want. Another basic right is that of saying yes or no to what we want. In a nutshell, we can be whoever or whatever we want. Ross Goering made a statement (DN, Oct. 17) that made me wonder. He said "anyone with such a low standard of morals (because of how she was dressed) as this girl, cannot prove without a reasonable doubt, in a court of law that she wasn't willing to have sex."

Mr. Goering, who gives you the right to judge the morals of someone you know nothing about except for the clothes she was wearing? Who gives you the right to say just because she wore a lace miniskirt and no underwear that she was asking to be RAPED!?! Who gives you or anyone else that right? There is not a fine line between looking for sex and being raped! One is a choice and the other is clearly not a choice.

I fear for our country with minds like yours and the jurors of this case. Is this girl responsible for every male who cannot control himself when a woman dresses a certain way? Would this give him the right to rape anyone on a beach with a bikini on (wouldn't you call that advertising her body)? Does the way you dress give me the right to attack you, or for that matter does your differing in opinion give me that right? The way you have set up your opinion is that each and everyone of us has to be conscious of everything we do for fear that it may give another the right to violate our individual rights.

I am sorry, but I am not up for that type of labor. I surely don't believe that you would stand for a country that enforced law in this manner.

The right of choice is a component of our everyday lives, a right we all too easily forget we actually have. This case not only took away this woman's right of choice but it was taken away because of who she chooses to be or in this instance, what she chose to wear.

This woman chose not to have sex, so clearly her rights were violated. If we start to base decisions and opinions on the way people choose to dress, walk, talk or express themselves, we inevitably will lose many of the rights we all too often forget we have.

Irene Hannappel
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Former DN editor upset by denouncement of Abernathy

"No man is a hero to his valet de chambre," goes the well-known proverb. It is this bit of folk wisdom, I suppose, to which Lee Rood objects in application to Martin Luther King Jr. Rood, however, should recall Hegel's addendum to the proverb: "But not because the former is no hero, but because the latter is a valet."

Abernathy's recollection of King's last night in this world -- he claims it was spent in less-than-platonic communion with members of the opposite sex -- hardly detracts from King's deserved status as a modern hero, let alone constitutes, as Rood paroxysmally describes it, "the worst nightmare of today's civil rights activists."

Rood, in contrast, apparently believes that the fact so significantly detracts from King's achievements that she engages in shrill denunciation of Abernathy, indisputably one of King's closest friends and an important civil rights leader in his own right, for writing down his recollection of the fact and she, by implication, sides with those calling for Abernathy to retract his recollection.

I agree with some of the thrust of Rood's sentiments, yet several things bother me about the editorial (Aside from the fact that Rood obviously has not read the book and, thus, has absolutely no good reason to believe

Abernathy's book is intended to "belittle (King's) accomplishments." Also, Abernathy is hardly "exposing" King as a "womanizer." That King struggled with sexual sin is already well-known from many other sources -- and King admitted that it was a serious problem in his life).

First, the debate exploded into the media because several persons who might very well know what King did during his last night disputed Abernathy's recollection. They were around King at the time. Rood, however, was not. Aside from the sheer pretense of Rood to assert her opinion in a dispute over which she can't possibly know the facts firsthand -- since it is precisely those firsthand facts that are the focus of the dispute -- is the more practical question, since she has seen fit to speak, of what is her basis for independently evaluating the veracity of the disputing parties. I mean, really, I have a difficult time believing that Rev. Abernathy would create a fabrication in order to sell books; at the same time I have a hard time believing that the other parties would call Abernathy's recollection a lie unless it were. What does Rood know about the character of any of these people that would permit her to make the conclusion that she does?

What's more, the tone of the editorial was that of outrage -- and an outrage not fully accounted for by the possibility that Abernathy lied. Rather, a fair reading would indicate that even if his recollection is true, Rood would have had request, but, what's worse, now that the recollection is public, Rood would now have Abernathy silenced or even retract his claim even if it is fact.

Perhaps Rood would like to believe that Martin Luther King, the saint, was not also Martin Luther King Jr., the sinner. As far as it goes -- so would I. But don't expect my wish to alter the facts of his life.

Biographies are supposed to tell the stories of peoples' lives. To be sure, much modern biography seems to pander to a prurient interest -- which is reason for lamentation in itself; and perhaps, that more appropriate topic for Rood's jeremiad.

But given that the event is recorded in the biography, what purpose does it serve to fume over the facts of the matter? (I note, again, that individuals with access to the facts can fume over Abernathy's recollection; in which case, the problem for the rest of us is to evaluate the competing claims.)

At bottom, I guess my problem with Rood's editorial is this: I'm presently on leave, after two years in residence, from one of the nation's

most liberal universities -- Brown University. During my sojourn there I had occasion to note that it is not only an unfashionable opinion that brings criticism -- that is to be accepted -- but, more disturbing, if a fact is deemed inconvenient by the arbiters of the Politically Correct, then one could expect a host of ideological lap dogs to begin a noisy yapping so as to prevent the fact from being asserted and, if not that, then heard.

The student daily, for which I write, while largely composed of very liberal students, always insists on being free from the demands of the Politically Correct -- an insistence that has occasionally resulted in reporters and editors being assaulted physically as well as verbally. Thus, although we disagree profoundly at times, these are liberals for whom I have the greatest respect.

In contrast, in her editorial -- and I have noticed a similar tone taken recently in editorials written in the Daily Nebraskan's institutional voice -- Lee Rood seems intent on instilling the chilling dynamic of the Politically Correct at UNL; she seems intent on suppressing through shrill denunciation a fact ostensibly inconvenient for her ideology.

I think Rood could, perhaps, question the need for Abernathy to have included the particular recollection at

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