

# **New York Radical Feminists Manifesto of Shared Rape**

## **(1971)**

---

**It is no accident that the New York Radical Feminists, through the technique of consciousness- raising, discovered that rape is not a personal misfortune but an experience shared by all women in one form or another. When more than two people have suffered the same oppression the problem is no longer personal but political-and rape is a political matter.**

**In January, 1971, at the Rape Speak-out organized by the Radical Feminists women began to tell their stories publicly. One woman remembered the "depantsing" ritual where grade-school boys forcibly removed the under pants of little girls; another woman was raped by a gynaecologist who was, incidentally, a close friend of the victim's mother; another was told by her psychiatrist to masturbate in front of him as part of her "treatment," and still another had sexual intercourse with her therapist, his way of curing her neurosis. There were women raped by their husbands, on the street by strangers, on dates, by housebreakers, etc. One woman, a near victim, suggested castration as an appropriate punishment for the rapist, and her suggestion was greeted with wild applause by the almost all-female audience. Had all these women been raped on the street by strangers, or was there something in their relationships with men that gave them a gut understanding of the meaning of rape? Is it possible that the average male is programmed to be a rapist?**

**When the Radical Feminists held the rape conference in April, 1971, a body of information that dealt with rape from the political, social, and psychological point of view of its victims began to be developed. The central revelation was that the violent rapist and the boy friend/husband are one. The friend and lover commits rape every bit as much as the "fiend" prowling the street.**

**Man has invented standards of superiority (male) and inferiority (female). Unsupported by reality as this idea is man is always uneasy and threatened by the possibility that woman will one day claim her full right to human existence, so he has found ways to enslave her. He has married her, and through the family, binds her to him as wife and mother to his children. He has kept her helpless and dependent, forcing her to work when he needed her labor, isolating her, beating her, (physically or psychologically), and as final proof of his power and her debasement as a possession, a thing, a chunk of meat, he has raped her. The act of rape is the logical expression of the essential relationship now existing between men and women.**

**It is a matter to be dealt with in feminist terms for female liberation.**

**MARY ANN MANHART  
FLORENCE RUSH**

**July, 1971**

---

**From *Rape: the First Sourcebook for Women*, by New York Radical Feminists, edited by Noreen Connell and Cassandra Wilson, published by New American Library in 1974.**

---