For how long must ‘rape culture’ at Maties continue?

Stellenbosch University students say they are tired of pleas going unnoticed

Juliana Claasens regard women as their equals.

Because too many men from all walks of life secretly harbour the deep-seated myth of male entitlement. Beliefs that often are brought to the fore in the presence of alcohol.

How do we go about ending a rape culture?

This should actually start long before students arrive at university.

It should already start at home where boys are taught the importance of empathy; to respect others, and that all people are equal. It should start in schools where boys are taught that rape is no joke and that “no” means “no”. Not try harder.

What is crucial in the family setting and schools is the importance of fostering other forms of masculinity that are not associated with violence and coercion.

My work as a biblical scholar has been dedicated to the role of narratives both ancient and modern "thatNarrative" the trauma of rape in helping men and women to recognise the existence of a rape culture.

I propose that biblical narratives such as the story of the rape of Tamar by her half-brother Amnon (2 Samuel 13) or the attempted rape of Susannah by two esteemed elders in her community that forms part of the Apocryphal addition to the book of Daniel, have the power to draw readers in and do two things: First, these narratives offer fertile space to help victims of rape and sexual assault, as well as women and men who stand in solidarity with those who have been violated, to overcome the barriers of silence, secrecy and denial, so naming the violence of rape which is deeply systemic in nature.

And second, these narratives also show the courageous responses of victims of sexual violence who resist in whatever way they can to encourage women and men everywhere to do whatever they can to refuse to accept the current rape culture as "normal".

Attempts like the recent midnight vigil at SU’s centre in the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch which included fire alarms going off at 9am as a sign that will no longer be quiet about violence against women in our community. Ticking Back the Night campaigns on campuses across the US; the Thursdays in Black initiative in which everyone is encouraged to wear black on Thursdays as a reminder of the reality of violence against women, are all creative ways of reclaiming our agency and in some small way help end a rape culture.

These and other similar initiatives are rooted in the "crazy" belief that we can live in a world where there is no violence against women.

In an essay in the book, Transforming a Rape Culture (2006), Andrea Dworkin's bold act of imagining a 24-hour day in which no single woman is raped, reminds us why we continue to write, teach, speak, march and end to the rape culture in our community, our country and the rest of the world.

She writes: "And on that day, that day of grace, that day when not one woman is raped, we will begin the real practice of equality, because we can't begin it before that day."

"But on that day it becomes real."

And then, instead of rape we will for the first time in our lives -- both men and women -- begin to experience freedom.

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