



## SEXUAL ASSAULT, RAPE & INCEST

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE

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Never discuss the subject of rape or incest in any context - regardless of the question - without expressing sympathy for the victim. Even if the question is framed in terms of the rights of the baby, pivot to first express support for the victim, how you would and the community should help her and how abortion does not solve her problem.

### KNOW THE FACTS

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#### *Definition<sup>1</sup>*

The FBI's summary description of rape is: "Penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim."

#### *Data<sup>2</sup>*

Be aware of the facts about sexual assault, rape, and incest. Use reputable sources when you speak. If a fact is in dispute, you can say something like: "While it is difficult if not impossible to determine exact numbers, most experts believe that about 60% of sexual assaults go unreported."

### ANSWER THE QUESTION

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**I can't believe you would try to get a woman to have her rapist's baby - how insensitive can you be? OR**

**How do pregnancy centers support victims of sexual assault, including rape?**

- Our center believes that rape victims deserve our unqualified compassion and support. We exist to empower women to make life-affirming choices in even the most difficult circumstances.
- The trauma of rape has a lifetime of emotional, psychological and physical implications for survivors. Our hearts go out to every person who has experienced rape or sexual assault.
- Care Net pregnancy centers treat every woman with respect and compassion. Centers regularly refer women who have been victimized by rape for immediate medical care, caring professional counseling, and law enforcement help. We also join many women who have chosen life after rape in rejecting the conclusion that the violence of rape can only be answered with the violence of abortion. We believe every woman should be empowered to create her own success story and welcome her child into life.

**How should society treat offenders? OR**

**Aren't rape and forced birth both ways the patriarchy dominates women? You are probably just one of those rape culture apologists who secretly believes that men have a right to control women's bodies?**

- Rape is a despicable crime of power that violates a woman's fundamental agency and human dignity. Unfortunately, sexual assault remains under-reported and under-prosecuted. Rapists must be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, and victims of rape must be assured of the full support of their communities and the legal system.
- Care Net stands for human rights over anyone who would violate the life or rights of another – from the rapist to the abortionist. We also stand with survivors as they seek justice and find healing.
- Rapists use force and control to assault a woman's human rights of agency and self-determination, causing untold anguish. Approximately one in four American women and one in six men are sexual assault survivors. Clearly, this is a serious and pervasive crime.

<sup>1</sup>Definition is from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI): <https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/recent-program-updates/new-rape-definition-frequently-asked-questions>

<sup>2</sup>Statistics are from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center: [http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications\\_nsvrc\\_factsheet\\_media-packet\\_statistics-about-sexual-violence\\_0.pdf](http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_factsheet_media-packet_statistics-about-sexual-violence_0.pdf)

## Why would you force a victim of rape or incest to continue pregnancy caused by a rapist? OR

### Do you support rape and incest exceptions to laws limiting access to abortion?

- This difficult situation primarily involves three people: the rapist who committed a despicable crime, the woman who was victimized by him, and the baby who had no say in her conception. **The rapist should suffer the legal and social consequences of his crime (which do not include the death penalty in the U.S.). The woman should receive all the support her community can give her. And the baby should be given an opportunity to live.** It makes no sense to kill or punish a woman for the rapist's crime, as occurs in some countries. In the same way, it makes no sense to end the baby's life because of the crime of the rapist. No innocent victim should be punished - and certainly not more severely than the perpetrator of a crime.
- Even in a difficult situation like rape, the unborn child's human rights should be respected. We must not let circumstances dictate to us when human rights are recognized. Otherwise, we could justify all sorts of atrocities in the name of "difficult circumstances."

## Wouldn't a woman's mental health be damaged if she is forced to continue an unwanted pregnancy caused by rape or incest? OR

### Don't you think a woman who has been raped should have more rights than an undeveloped fetus?

- When we started talking about rape, it's so very important to let survivors speak for themselves, rather than assuming we know what is best for them. **Anna<sup>3</sup> is a powerful and courageous young woman. When she became pregnant by her abuser, she spoke up, resulting in his criminal conviction. When she was just 13 years old, Anna welcomed her daughter, Josey, into the world.** She rejected the idea that inflicting violence upon another innocent victim, her baby, would be the best response to the horror of rape. When a woman like Anna becomes pregnant after being raped, her son or daughter is no less deserving of human rights than you and me - or Josey.
- Abortion is not the way to express sympathy or support to a victim of this crime. Abortion compounds the grief and loss experienced by many survivors of sexual assault and only destroys the life of another victim: her child. Suggesting abortion as a solution to pregnancies that result from rape communicates to many sexual assault survivors that you think their pain can be erased with a suction machine or pill. Our hearts go out to survivors of rape. That's why we reject the premise that the violence of abortion is the best answer to the violence of rape.
- At our center, we empower women to make life-affirming choices and create their own success stories in even the most challenging circumstances. Sadly, many people who care about the rights of women who are victimized by rape are willing to penalize the 2nd victim: a baby who had no say in how she came to be. Regardless of size, she (or he) should not be dehumanized.

### NOMENCLATURE RECOMMENDATION:

- Assume that "rape" refers to the sexual violation of an unwilling person / person incapable of consent. If you need to specifically refer to otherwise consensual sexual activity where one party is not of legal age to consent, use the term "statutory rape."
- Use "sexual assault" to refer to any non-consensual sexual touch, penetration, exposure, or attempt to do the same. Sexual assault can be non-consensual because the victim did not consent (said "no" or didn't say "yes") or because s/he was incapable of consent (incapacitated by drugs or alcohol, too young to consent legally, or unable to consent due to reduced mental capacity). Rape is always sexual assault but not all sexual assault is rape.
- Use "victim" to refer to the specific circumstances of the assault and in a legal discussion to contrast the "victim" to the "assailant" (rapist).
- Use "survivor" to refer to the person who was sexually assaulted.
- Use "rapist," "perpetrator," and "criminal" to refer to the person who committed the rape or sexual assault if his / her identity is unknown or you are speaking in the abstract. If referring to a specific person, only use those words if the person has been convicted in a court of law; otherwise, say "alleged rapist," "alleged perpetrator," or "alleged criminal."
- Unless the specific context of the discussion precludes male victims of sexual assault (i.e. pregnancy), always mention "women and men" (in that order) as both victims / survivors and perpetrators of sexual assault.

<sup>3</sup>Anna's story has been published on LifeNews.com and can be found at: <http://www.lifenews.com/2013/02/11/courage-raped-impregnated-13-year-old-girl-keeps-baby/>