



## An Open Letter to Amanda Marcotte (content note)

[Admin: this piece is cross-posted from Nerd Grrrl Island](#)

### An Open Letter To Amanda Marcotte

*[Note: I just came to learn that Amanda Marcotte herself [is also rape victim](#). I'll leave my piece as originally composed, as my feelings toward the views she espouses remain the same.]*

Dear Amanda,

I know I'm only one in a swell of people angry at you right now for [your latest Slate piece](#). I hope you will take the time to at least hear some of our voices, especially those of us who are victims. I can only assume, given the tone and your utter lack of empathy toward rape and domestic violence victims that you are neither. I am grateful for that, I would wish no one such pain. I'm saddened to see, however, your inability to understand the torment, anxiety, and roller coaster of emotions that comes with experiencing such violence. Your piece, and your beliefs, are callous and harmful.

The other night, my partner was frustrated at a jerk who ran a light while we were crossing the street. He, having to dodge the car, was understandably angry at the driver. He hollered at the driver and looked mad as hell. I immediately cowered, my pulse quickened, I had to remind myself to breathe. As we walked through Brooklyn, on what was supposed to be a fun night out, my thoughts raced and I proceeded to withdraw. I flashed back to the men who were abusive, whose anger was taken out on me, who were a danger to me. In an instant, my partner's very normal reaction triggered me into a full-blown anxiety attack. I felt like I was drowning. We stopped on a quiet street and talked through the myriad of feelings I was experiencing. He has learned how to help me in these situations. We spoke, I cried, he held me. I was able to breathe again.

About a year ago, following an amazing birthday weekend in Philly, I was seated next to a man on the bus. It was a two-hour ride, and by the end of it, I wanted to vomit and was sure I was suffocating. The man did nothing to me. He did brush up against my leg and elbow, unintentionally. The bus was dark, but I was safe. I spiraled into a nasty panic attack [over the course of the bus ride](#). It took over an hour to recover enough so that I could continue onto my train and head home.

I make sure to ask the people in my life to not come up behind me or surprise me in a room as I will be startled. And not the "oh my goodness!" sense, but a heart-pounding, fearing-for-my-life sense. Certain noises send stress hormones pumping through my veins. There are nights I'm unable to sleep. Nightmares terrify me from time to time. I make life-choices regarding my social experiences and work based on where I might have to travel, hours and areas I would have to be walking alone, types of people I may be in contact with, the list goes on. I have to rethink



most decisions in my life, from a night out to a hobby to employment, far longer and deeper than most people.

Amanda, I tell you all of this with further explaining that I have been through counseling. I am “in touch” with my feelings. I am open about my experiences. I seek out help when I need it. I have a solid support system. Professionals use the words “healed” and “recovered” to describe my progress. My rape was 15 years ago. I have gone on to do many great things. My life is pretty damn wonderful. And still, I am continually going up against [PTSD](#).

Always erring on the side of victim sensitivity means putting some very bad men back out on the streets, where they will likely attack someone else. If that’s the price that you feel is worth paying, OK, but it’s also understandable that prosecutors might try to do everything within their power to convict a guy who likes tying women to chairs and assaulting them.

Those last two lines of your piece are victim-blaming to a level I thankfully don’t come across often. And trust me, victims are blamed plenty. We are blamed for what we wore, what we drank, how we flirted, how we didn’t fight back, how we didn’t contact the police, how we never prosecuted. In a sentence, you squarely place *all* the blame on us if our rapist attacks someone else. Did you for a second realize how harmful that might be to a victim? You follow that up with a vivid and triggering sentence, saying it’s better prosecutors *force* us to testify. Even, you would argue, if that includes putting us in jail. Need I remind you that would put us at an even [greater risk of being assaulted again](#)?

You don’t think every victim who chooses not to report doesn’t second-guess themselves? You don’t think we aren’t haunted by what a rapist or abuser may go on to do? It’s yet another layer of the self-blame and disgust many of us must work through following rape (or domestic violence). I’ve rethought *everything*. If I hadn’t willingly sipped on the beer he bought me. If I said no when he asked to use my bathroom. If I screamed louder. If I woke up and realized immediately that what had happened to me was rape. If it didn’t take months of nightmares, social withdrawal, and anxiety to realize I was raped. If I had spoken up sooner. If I’d gone to the police...

Here’s the thing, when I did finally come to terms with the fact that [I was raped](#), I considered pressing charges. I knew his name was John, he was involved in mixed martial arts, he lived outside of Fort Worth, he was wealthy, and his father was a well-known car dealership owner. I also knew that he asked me to go out with him and I said yes. I had drinks with him. I allowed him to come into my place. I knew proving my case, especially months after the fact, would be near impossible. I knew the questions the police would ask me, and I was unwilling to allow myself to be further traumatized. Prior to the night of my rape, I was a carefree 21-year old, enjoying my newfound freedoms and just coming into my own sexually. **I had done nothing wrong.** Yet, I knew I’d be criminalized. I also feared what my family would think, I wanted to



protect them from an emotional landslide as well. For all those reasons, and many more, I did not come forward.

You would say I should have contacted prosecutors and brought my attacker to court, no matter what. Yet, you can't possibly understand [how emotionally fragile I was following my rape](#). I wasn't sleeping, and when I did, I awoke screaming from nightmares. I didn't leave my apartment after sunset. I double and triple checked if I'd locked my door. I left lights and the television on through the night. The anxiety weighed down on me until I could no longer function; I stopped working, I disassociated with most aspects of my life, I became a shell of a person. I can say with certainty that had I come in contact with my rapist again, even in the supposed safety of a courtroom, I would have had a nervous breakdown. I'm not saying that to be dramatic—I would have required hospitalization. I refuse to apologize for making my well-being a priority; my mental health is more important to me than prosecuting my rapist. How many times do you think someone can be forced against their will before they break?

You know what, Amanda? There's a hundred things I *could* have or *should* have done, and I did do the most important one: survive. **I survived, not only the acts of violence done against me, but the aftershocks of those abuses.** I wake up every morning. I leave my house. I function in a world that challenges me on a daily basis to conquer the issues that arose from it all. You can tell me, and every other victim out there, that our lives are not worth as much as locking up a rapist or abuser, but I will disagree until the day I die on this. How dare you lay further blame on me? I beg that you listen to victims, hear our stories, see our lives. We deserve to be counted. You should not be the only one heard. You may have a stage that most of us do not, however you do not get to dictate what decisions victims make and how we proceed with our lives.

I am here. I have lived through these crimes and have found my voice despite the men who wanted to harm and silence me. I will continue to do everything in my power to move forward in my own life. I'll keep speaking out to ensure that every other victim is able to make the same choices I have been able to in my journey of healing. I refuse to stay silent while a woman with a platform attempts to guilt and shame rape victims. Amanda, rapists rape and they should be punished, not us. *That* is the unavoidable truth.

Sincerely,

[L.A.](#)