



Nick Ross: Rape isn't Rape

Nick Ross, creator of the BBC's Crimewatch, has just published a book about crime. He has published a brief preview in the Daily Mail today which is, essentially, a list of myths of violence against women which blames women for being victims of male violence whilst minimising male violence.

What the Daily Mail article demonstrates is that Ross hates feminists. Every single "fact" about violence against women that Ross tries to debunk is used to demonise feminists. Apparently, feminists paint women as "victims" of male violence and that it's feminists fault women are frequently victimised by men because we do not hold women accountable for the violence perpetrated against them.

Ross deliberately misunderstands research into domestic violence to imply that women are as likely as men to commit DV and ignores the research into "gaslighting". He also blames women for lashing out at a violent partner. Ross conveniently neglects to mention that the "research" which "proves" that women commit domestic violence as frequently as men has been disproven because it is deeply flawed. That "research" was based on frequency of reporting of domestic violence. If we were to look at it simplistically based only on that criteria then women do commit domestic violence as frequently as men. This research ignores two very basic issues: 1) women frequently experience domestic violence 30-40 times before reporting; and 2) the issue of gaslighting. Gaslighting is emotionally abusive behaviour wherein the male partner harasses their, usually female, partner into lashing out physically. The male partner then has "evidence" that his female partner is as abusive as he is. This "evidence" is used to control and belittle the female partner further, especially if their are children involved. That is domestic violence. It is not evidence that women are as violent as men; it is evidence of the myriad of ways in which men are violent.

Ross makes some bland statements about the differentiation in sentencing between men and women for crimes without taking into account the gendered construction of crime which does give women harsher punishments than men. He does point out that women are more likely to receive harsher sentences for sex crimes than men are but he neglects to point out that women are more likely to be incarcerated than men for their first crime. Men are frequently incarcerated for crimes of violence whilst women are incarcerated for crimes which are the consequence of severe abuse, substance misuse, poverty and male violence. Women receive custodial sentences for shoplifting at much higher rates than men.

The entire article is deeply offensive and wrong but it is the section on rape which is truly appalling. This is what Ross says about rape:

"Rape is one of the most violating crimes. Victims tend to feel dirty, embarrassed, racked with revulsion and self-blame, and, since it almost always involves a male assailant, rape is one of the defining issues for radical feminism. But have the red mists of politics and emotion clouded reality here?"



Rape victims were once treated appallingly, as though it was all their fault, but have we now gone too far the other way? Many of the victims seem to think we have. The main argument of my book is this: we can aggravate crime by tempting fate, and we curb it by playing safe.

We have come to acknowledge it is foolish to leave laptops on the back seat of a car. We would laugh at a bank that stored sacks of cash by the front door. We would be aghast if an airport badly skimmed on its security measures.

Our forebears might be astonished at how safe women are today given what throughout history would have been regarded as incitement. Not even in the licentious days of Charles II in the 17th Century was it acceptable for women to dress as provocatively as they have done in Western culture since the 1960s.

Equally they would be baffled that girls are mostly unescorted, stay out late, often get profoundly drunk and sometimes openly kiss, grope or go to bed with one-night stands.

No amount of temptation can excuse rape, or any other crime. On that point 'slutwalk' demonstrators [those reacting against a Canadian policeman whose advised women to 'avoid dressing as sluts' if they did not want to be harassed] are obviously correct. Yet for some it is heresy to suggest that victims should ever be held responsible at all."

Apparently, women are responsible for being raped for just being in possession of a vagina in public. After all, the suggestion that we hold individuals responsible for having their laptops stolen if left on the front seat of the car is the same as women making themselves vulnerable to rape by going out in public in clothes. It is women's fault for getting raped by wearing "provocative clothes". Men can't possibly be expected to control themselves when they see a woman in a skirt. One has to wonder what babies wear which is "provocative"? Or, elderly women? Or, women in jeans?

Ross also ignores the fact that the vast majority of women are raped by men they know. How are women supposed to avoid being raped by their husbands? Fathers? Boyfriends? Employers? How are women supposed to avoid being raped in their own homes? Statistically, women are much safer completely intoxicated at 3 in the morning in a town centre than they are in their own homes. But, we don't talk about that: instead we focus on the women who are raped by strangers and then blame the women for being "provocative".

Not content with blaming women for being raped, Ross goes on to discourage women from reporting rapes within their relationships:

"Bear in mind that some of the allegations are made weeks or even years after the event took place, and the average rape case takes nearly two years to come to trial. When cases do go to court, 55 per cent result in a conviction.

Could it be that court proceedings are not always the best way of dealing with what happens in relationships? If that is the case, could it be that women (and men who are raped) are generally acting wisely if they choose not to take that route?"



Perhaps, I am confused but I am fairly sure rape in a relationship is as illegal as rape by a stranger. But, Ross wants women to forgo reporting their violent partners. Men's lives and reputations are, as ever, more important than the bodily integrity and safety of women. Would Ross suggest that children not report being raped by their fathers; after all, these constitute relationships too. God forbid, we actually hold men legally responsible for their own actions.

Ross continues his victim-blaming by attacking women involved in prostitution. Now, it is true that some women are involved in the sex industry through choice but these women are not statistically representative of women who are prostituted and trafficked. Many of the women who are prostituted are first prostituted as children. Many have histories of sexual abuse and are substance misusers. Poverty is a huge indicator of women's vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Not all women who are prostitutes are victims of sexual exploitation but for every Belle du Jour, there are literally hundreds of teenage girls and boys being trafficked across cities, the UK and the world. To pretend otherwise is to ignore the realities of the lives of thousands of women and children across the UK.

Ross is quite clear though: it is feminists, especially radical feminists, fault women think they are victims. If women didn't think they were victims, then they wouldn't be victimised. Women are at least partially responsible for being victims of domestic violence and rape. Men who rape are "provoked".

Men are not responsible for the violence they commit because women shouldn't make themselves vulnerable to crime.

Welcome to the Capitalist-Patriarchy: where the lives of women and children are irrelevant.