

Rape, Consent, and Patriarchy

**We all know what it is, now it's time to
get off our asses and make some
changes.**

To the reader:

What follows is a real letter, which I wrote (and mailed) to an ex-partner. I did this of my own choosing. I was not "called out" on any behavior. I had in fact not interacted with her for several years. Chances are, had I not written this letter I could have lived 100 years and never had to deal with this issue.

We had been friends in high school. In our adult lives we formed a relationship and lived together for the duration of it, during which I abused and raped her. She eventually ended it, though even at the time I knew that did not happen as soon as she would have liked. (I say "knew" hesitantly here, for I do not want to speak for her.) Several months later I payed a surprise visit to her home and assaulted her, which is referenced in the letter. A year after that, I tried unsuccessfully to reestablish a friendship with her, by pretending nothing had ever happened. This letter was not another attempt at a friendship but rather an attempt to finally treat her as a human being. At the time of this writing I have not interacted with her in about two years, nor do I really expect to do so again. Certain information has been left _____ to preserve the anonymity of her/the survivor.

Dear _____

This note has been much too long in coming. Unfortunately it took me this long to gain the humility and understanding necessary to write this. I hope that by writing this some good may come to your life that would not have otherwise. I owe you an enormous apology. I am truly sorry. I am sorry that I abused you. I am sorry that I raped you. On oh-so-many occasions I coerced you into having sex with me. On some occasions I believe that I tried to push myself on you so much that you gave in only to get it over with. On some occasions I believe that I tried to push myself on you so much that you were simply too worn out to resist any longer. Several times you clearly stated "No" and I continued to try anyway. I never asked for your consent before touching or kissing you, including of note, the time I came to your house while back from _____ to _____. I came to your house that night with the sole thought of having sex with you. While as your partner, I was distrustful of you and used

manipulation and passive-aggressive tactics to keep you from having friends aside from myself.

I remember more than one instance when you tried to explain to me that these things were occurring and about how it was negatively affecting you. I also remember that on each occasion I failed/refused to accept what you said or to respect it. Rather, I acted like a victim and tried to make you feel guilty about it. I never did respect you as an equal... as a partner. Rather, I trivialized your intelligence and placed you on a pedestal, always treating you as my Barbie doll prize. If you had weighed 100 pounds more or had an unattractive face I would likely not have been with you. I did not have any concern for your thoughts or emotions except in terms of what it would say about me as a "man" who could or could not keep a desirable woman happy or about how it would affect whether or not you would stay with me.

These are things I have come to understand about how I treated you. I am sorry about all of them. Sexual and emotional abuse is wrong. Rape is fucking wrong. I am

analyzing what society has taught you and how you live your life, past and present.

This letter is proof that men can fight patriarchy too. It is not a womyn's-only struggle. There's more to the fight than just spelling "woman" funny or being PC around our friends or letting a womyn carry heavy loads too. Let's get on with it already.

Feedback is welcome and desired:

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working on correcting the way I interact with others in my life, learning how to not try to dominate others. I am also working to bring the same kind of awareness to others, especially men, so as to hopefully break the cycle of abuse.

If there is anything you want to address to me, whether about things you feel I did wrong but have not mentioned, things you want to say about what I've written, things you want me to know about how I've affected you, or just to say hi, then I am open to your words. If there is anything you feel I must do to address the past or to work on the future, then as a survivor of my violence towards you, you have a right to say so and I have a responsibility to honor it. I also understand and accept if you wish to never interact with me again.

Lastly, I am sorry that you and I have lost each other as the friends we were before our relationship began. This is because of my own actions and is through no fault of your own. I apologize to you for being so ignorant and selfish at your expense.

If you want to talk or write, please do so. If you wish for me to avoid any further interaction with you, then a simple message stating such (need not be from you personally) will assure me that you received this and I will honor your choice.

I hope all is well with you.

Sincerely,

(Contact information was thusly provided.)

I don't want to sit here and regurgitate a bunch of rhetoric about what patriarchy is and why it sucks. Most people already know and if you don't there is extensive information available on the subject, go find it, read it, ask a womyn (or even another man) about it. I'm sure folks would be happy to load you down with information. No, this writing is about actually doing something

about it. Abusers need to own up to their shit. We shouldn't have to wait for someone to call us out on it. It will likely be easier for both the abuser and the survivor, as well as on our communities, if this is done voluntarily. Most of the things I was taught growing up about "how to be a man" was sexist bullshit, but one thing they told me, own up to your shit instead of hiding or denying like a coward, I happen to agree with (for people of *any* gender identity).

Unfortunately for many abusers, realizing that wrongdoing has occurred in the first place is the hardest part. If you are a male, and you have had any sort of sexual relationship (particularly prior to learning about patriarchy) then chances are you have abused someone. If you have or have had any sort of sexual/physical interaction with another person without first receiving full, verbal consent, then you are an abuser or a rapist. If you know this, and you intentionally attempt to have any sort of physical interaction with another person without their full, verbal consent or coerce them into giving it, then you are not a player, or a ladies' man, or even cool, you are an asshole and I know many womyn out there will stick a knife in your gut when they find out. It's time to start