

Transcript of KMYR series on The Public Affair: "The Victim"
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This radio program is a five-part series by Diane Ingram, dealing with the victims of rape. Interviews with the Rape Crisis Center personnel and with several women who have been raped.

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DIANE INGRIM: "Knowing it's been two damn months already, and though I no longer bother with checking each window each night, I still check the doors two and three times. Counting 'til I'll be free again. It's a standing joke in our house, 'If you want to find scissors, knife or hammer, look under a mattress.' Humor eases the pain. The anger is knowing how many women share this reality in silence or joking, all of us too embarrassed to dwell on it, tell anyone. But still haunted all the same, night by night. Waiting for time to erase, wash it free."

"ANN": As soon as I walk in to the door, all my calm, my self-confidence, ran out of me and all I could feel I could do was scream and cry.

INGRIM: Most people don't like thinking about rape and avoid discussing it because rape is an ugly, unpleasant subject. But forcible rape is the most frequently committed violent crime in America today and cannot be ignored. Sadly enough, rape is rapidly becoming a common experience. Facilities have been created to help the rape victim deal with their own feelings and the criminal justice system. Gail Benson [?], coordinator of the Rape Crisis Center at the University of New Mexico, and Linda McCreary [?], a former coordinator, talk about the service that's provided.

BENSON AND MCCREARY: We're open twenty-four hours a day, at least the telephones are. There's someone is at the other end of the phone at any time. And we're a totally confidential service so that a young teenager, for example, who is afraid to tell her parents and wants to know what to do, where she can get

medical help, can call and all she has to tell us is her first name and she can make that up if she'd like. And find out where she can get services [unintelligible]. We started a third-party reporting system because about half of the women that we talk to don't want to talk to the police. They're afraid. And this reporting system gets all the information about the rapist – his description – uh, where it happened, how it happened. Mostly the information that they take on a normal police report. It has everything on it except the woman's name, address – anything that will identify her. This helps to identify multiple offenders or dangerous areas. The Albuquerque Police Department has recognized the problem in how sex victims have been dealt with. They've had their consciousnesses raised. [laugh] Since then, they have started doing some sensitivity training for the field officers and while the first officer that the victim talks to at the hospital is a [unintelligible] officer, generally, he's had some sensitivity training and he takes only the bare minimum of information that would help in apprehending someone right away – where did it happen and what did he look like? The in-detail report, which is the one that can be embarrassing and difficult, is taken by two women detectives who operate a sex crimes unit for the Albuquerque Police. And they're used to dealing with rape victims. They know the problem. They're very competent, very sensitive women, and we've had nothing but good reports on them. I'm very pleased to say that. And it makes things a great deal easier for a rape victim to talk to a woman.

INGRIM: Just how important is it for a rape victim to talk to someone about her experience?

BENSON AND MCCREARY: It's very important for a victim to get in touch with someone within about the first twenty-four or forty-eight hours after the incident. Um, it's really important to work out those kinds of feelings right away or in ten years or in twenty years, people can end up having these recurrent sort of things.

INGRIM: But the rape victim isn't the only one affected. Her family and friends have to deal with their feelings too.

BENSON AND MCCREARY: Victims usually seem willing to deal with their emotional happenings – what's going on inside of them. And we've noticed that families have a lot of trouble dealing with a rape situation. And that after the

woman has dealt with her own feelings, she has to also deal with her family's feelings about it. And it is – it's really a difficult situation because you can't just pretend that nothing happened because something really really important happened. And husbands and fathers and children – mothers, um, their reactions are – their feelings are certainly just as important as the victim's feelings, but they just run the whole gamut. And it's really hard for a victim to re-integrate into her former life after a rape.

INGRIM: Women are not the only victims of sexual assault. Tomorrow, Gail and Linda will discuss the children and men who have come to the Rape Crisis Center for counseling. This is Diane Ingram on KMYR.

[5:34]

BENSON AND MCCREARY: We've served three hundred and fifty women and five men. Of the women, some of those were children. A normal reaction in a child is the child will not appear to be deeply affected. The child usually is trying to protect the parent, strangely enough. It's a very normal parental attitude to see that the child is taking it well since the child is protecting the parent. And to feel anger towards the child for what has happened – and this is not just some bad parents somewhere, this is among really good parents who have really good relationships with their children -- but this is really traumatizing to the mother and to the father, as well as the child. And it touches on problems they've had in the past, like everyone has. And we all have problems about sexuality because we grow up – sometimes we're allowed to talk about this and sometimes we're not. It touches on all these things that -- I don't know all the psychological workings of it, but I know that it's very normal for a parent to feel somewhat hostile toward a child and not know why. In their minds, they know the child has done absolutely nothing. And then they start to feel these emotions and then they start feeling guilty for feeling these emotions, and then the guilt comes out in anger. And that's why you've got to have family counseling. And these people have to know that they're not bad people for feeling these things. That they are normal things to feel.

INGRIM: What about the men that you said that have come here?

BENSON AND MCCREARY: Um, we've had only five men in the last year and three hundred and fifty women because – of, course [unintelligible] more women are sexually assaulted than men. We've had two instances of couples who were attacked. A couple [unintelligible] who were held at gunpoint and sexually assaulting the man, raping the woman. The man has all of the feelings, I think, that the women go through in being attacked, but he also has guilt because he's been raised to think he should protect women. And whether or not he knows that's ridiculous, he's still gonna feel that 'cause he's thought that and been told that all his life. The other thing is the embarrassment, the loss of masculinity. Whether he elected to go for any kind of counseling because it's considered a loss of masculinity not to deal with your own problems. I don't think that very many men report at all. I mean, if only one out of every ten women reports – that's the F.B.I. [Federal Bureau of Investigation] statistic which is probably conservative. Probably, in the case of men, it's probably one in three hundred. That's a guess, but that's how I feel. And we have a couple of male volunteers who have the [unintelligible] female volunteers and the two together can work with the couple or the men can work with the man alone.

INGRIM: When [unintelligible] Gail Benson and Linda McCreary at the Rape Crisis Center, does a woman asked to be raped by a behavior or manner of dress? Gail doesn't think so.

BENSON: I've never talked to a woman who's been raped who didn't feel guilty. Uh, it doesn't matter whether she was hitch-hiking or whether someone broke into her home, you know, through a window -- by breaking a window. Either way, she feels like she did something stupid. I don't know why. This is totally – I think it's because people have had the myth going for years that the woman asks for it in the case of rape, which is totally ridiculous.

INGRIM: Rape is seriously traumatizing, but with help, a woman can recover and perhaps become a stronger person. Tomorrow, "Ann", a rape victim, will speak of her experience. I'm Diane Ingram on KMYR.

[9:32]

INGRIM: A rape victim, who we shall call “Ann”, arrived home late one night. After parking her car, she had a premonition. She sat for a few minutes, telling herself she was imagining things, and got out.

ANN: Before I knew what was happening, I was blind-folded and shoved on the bottom of the car and taken somewhere to some kind of house or something – I don’t really know.

INGRIM: All of the victims that I spoke to said that rape wasn’t the first thing to enter their minds. Their main fear was of being killed.

ANN: The things that ran through my mind for those four hours they had me was just an incredible urge to live. I remember just saying to them, “I don’t care what you do, just let me live.” I don’t know how I got home that night and I don’t know exactly all the details of it because I did go into shock after I was home. I didn’t fight them. I didn’t think I had a chance. Because my calm, I think, was the only thing that kept them calm because the majority of them did want to kill me. And so, in a situation like this, my attitude I think helped a lot with the final outcome. Um, when I got home, my sister was out looking for me because my car was there and I wasn’t. And my brother, who was sleeping, got up and asked me where I was. And I told him I had been raped and he went back to bed. And my sister came home and she called for me. He said, “She’s okay, she’s just been raped.” And I think that’s the general feeling of a lot of men who don’t really understand all that it entails. Because to be raped is not – is not to get a good lay, you know? It was terrible. It was the most frightful thing that’s ever happened to me. And I think that was the general opinion of most anybody. Um, to an extent sympathetic, but a lot of the comments I heard was just, “Well, I’m glad you just sat back and took it and you didn’t fight it. That’s the only thing you can do. Just sit back and enjoy it.” And that makes me angry. That makes me very angry.

INGRIM: Of course, each woman’s reaction to being raped is different. This is how Ann felt:

ANN: I went into shock as soon as I walked in to the door – as soon as I realized I was safe. When I knew I didn’t have to count on myself, for myself, any more. When there were people there to take care of me, I just – I just lost all control.

INGRIM: Men's attitude toward rape and the victims of rape has been a problem not only in the criminal justice system, but in the hospitals as well.

ANN: The doctor – many doctors just would not give me a sedative because they wouldn't think that the situation called for it. That I should just go home and relax and everything would be okay.

INGRIM: Ann didn't report her rape, but she believes that a woman should.

ANN: I think police should be informed when you're raped and if there are any possible, uh, ways you can bring your rapist to court, I think it should be done because although the – although the prisons and all that will not be justifiable and that it's a social thing that has to be dealt with. These people can't walk the streets. Um, I think almost any man is capable of rape. And almost any man who has raped, who has let all the social morals overcome him and not relate to a woman as a woman and as another person should be dealt with on those lines. And should be prosecuted.

INGRIM: Tomorrow we'll hear from "Susan". She was at work when her rapist attacked. This is Diane Ingram on KMYR.

[14:36]

INGRIM: It was late and Susan was alone at work when a man came in.

SUSAN: He grabbed me immediately and dragged me into the alley and proceeded to rape me. So. A funny thing is that I -- I punched him. [laughs] He didn't really do anything except – except take me where he was going to take me. I had no idea what was going to happen – in fact, rape was about the last thing to occur to me. And as soon as I figured that out, I punched him in the stomach and he punched me back. And I just decided I'd rather just get raped than hospitalized because I had no idea what he might have with him.

INGRIM: I asked Susan what she did immediately afterwards.

SUSAN: Well, he finished and I got up and ran back. Locked myself in and called the police. They asked me what he looked like, what he was wearing, um, what happened. And I told them the same thing that I just told you. And, uh, they

looked through the alley to ask me to show exactly where we went and stuff – like retrace the steps. The only thing I can say that they didn't do that they should have was telling me to go to the hospital or to a doctor immediately and get checked out.

INGRIM: They didn't insist on that?

SUSAN: Uh uh. Well, they might have suggested it, but I sorta don't think so. And that's like – that's one of the main requirements for prosecution is you have to have seen a doctor. You have to have been examined. You can't prosecute without that.

INGRIM: And you didn't go to a doctor?

SUSAN: My mother and my boyfriend talked me into it. I didn't want to go. You know, I thought, you know, what's an examination going to do? But luckily I did go. I went to E.C.M.C. [??].

INGRIM: Susan told me how she felt about being raped at the time.

SUSAN: I was just really afraid. It just -- the whole thing just freaked me out. Just being forced into doing anything physically. It's just – it's a sick thing. It's just a really sick thing to want to rape someone. And someone who's into that has to be cared for in some way and putting them away for ten to fifty isn't going to do anything.

INGRIM: Susan's rapist confessed. But because she wanted him to receive psychological care, Susan agreed to prosecute on a lesser charge. He was sent to the forensic unit in Las Vegas, New Mexico, for rehabilitation with a minimum sentence of one year. But as with most victims of rape, the fear lingers.

SUSAN: I've never been an easily frightened person, but after that, just as soon as the sun went down it was just really scary for me unless was someone else around me that I knew or someone that I felt I could trust. I never used to worry about walking anywhere at night.

INGRIM: But now you do?

SUSAN: Yeah, well, not so much now, as like -- especially right after it happened. [clears throat] I still get real scared.

INGRIM: If you remember, last week the rapist said that the woman would forget. A woman who has been raped never forgets. Tomorrow we will explore some of the ways in which rape is encouraged by our society. I'm Diane Ingrim on KMYR
[18:19]

INGRIM: Rape has been called the all-American crime because of its increasing frequency in the United States. It would seem that our society encourages rape, and it does.

[background rock music]

Men are victimized by the exaggerated image of masculinity presented by the media, which equates masculinity with aggressiveness, dominance, brutality, and violence. This image permeates every form of media, even our music.

[Bad Company singing their song, "Can't Get Enough": "Well, I'll take whatever I want / and baby, I want you"]

Since women are encouraged to be passive, dependent, and non-violent, they are natural victims of men who buy this brand of masculinity. Rapists have difficulty relating to women emotionally and as individuals. This may in part be caused, and is certainly perpetuated by the use of women as sexual objects in advertising. For example, an attractive woman appears on the screen. We do not know and probably will never know if she is intelligent, productive, or even if she can speak. She is a body, a sexual symbol used to hold the male viewer's attention, while a male voiceover attempts to sell the viewer on the idea of buying the furniture she is stroking or the car she is sitting in. And often, though she is sitting alone in the car, she is in the back seat. "Against Rape" written by Andra Medea and Kathleen Thompson provides an example of ordinary sexual behavior in our society. The male is the aggressor, the soldier laying siege to the castle. The woman is the guardian of the gate. The defender of the sacred treasure. If the male forces his way in with a battering ram and captures the treasure, he has succeeded in his purpose. There is no cause for guilt or remorse. The woman, on the other hand, has failed in her purpose. She has allowed the treasure to be taken and feels herself to be at fault. She suffers from feelings of guilt besides the feelings of violation, humiliation, and defeat. And society, her family, the police, and the

courts, see her the same way. She has lacked the proper vigilance in guarding the treasure. "Why was she hitch-hiking? Why was she out so late at night? Why did she let him into her apartment?" They will ask as they would ask a sentinel why he fell asleep on guard duty. Now consider the case of Tom Smith. It was pay day and Mr. Smith put on a flashy suit, put a wad of bills in his pocket and stopped into a bar for a drink. Mr. Smith got loaded. When he was leaving, a man who had seen him flashing his wad in the bar was waiting for him in the alley. Mr. Smith was jumped and mugged. Now, do the police say, "Why are you wearing such a flashy suit, Mr. Smith?" Or "What were you doing in a bar?" "What were you doing in the alley?" Or, "I bet you fantasize about being robbed, don't you, Mr. Smith? Come on, you can tell us. You enjoyed it, didn't you? I bet you loved every minute of it."

The double standard represented by the case of Mr. Smith is perpetuated by the law's conception of women as being property of men. The 1952-53 Yale Law Journal states that "the consent standard in our society does more than protect a significant item of social currency for women. It fosters and, in turn bolstered by, a masculine pride in the exclusive possession of a sexual object." The consent of a woman to sexual intercourse awards the man a privilege of bodily access. A personal prize whose value is enhanced by sole ownership. An additional reason for the man's condemnation of rape may be found in the threat to his status from a decrease in the value of his sexual possession, which would result from forcible violation. I would like to point out that in no state can a man be accused of raping his wife. How can a man steal what already belongs to him? New Mexico's current rape law was written in 1892. In order for a rape victim to accuse a man of rape, it must be proved that his penis penetrated her vagina. This ignores homosexual rape and other brutal sex crimes. Melissa Nolan, president of the Women's Political Caucus, believes that a key problem concerning the current attitude toward rape is that it is thought of as simply a sexual crime rather than a violent physical assault. And that victims are assumed to have consented unless they have been beaten. This ignores threats of force, such as the use of a knife or gun, which of course creates the problem of having one person's word against another's. A six-page draft of a proposed bill has been written which includes the following points: That threats of force as well as abuse should support a rape charge. That the past sexual history of a woman should be considered

inadmissible evidence unless it is in connection with the defendant. And a provision to prevent the use in media of the victim's or the accused's names until arraignment. There's a sponsor, a member of the legislature, who will introduce the bill. However he isn't in agreement on all points. Recently, the bill was submitted to the legislative counsel service, an agency which works for the legislature. This agency compares the draft with other laws in other states, researches court cases, verdicts, and constitutional questions. It makes sure that by the time the bill reaches the legislature, all obvious problems have been resolved.

The objective of this program was not to frighten women, but to provide information and insight into the problem of rape and to explode some of the myths surrounding it. The rapist is not a sex-starved deviant. The rapist is 17-30 years of age, is happily married, and scores normally on psychological exam. A woman who gets raped asks for it by her dress and behavior. Fifty-three to ninety percent of all rapes are planned in advance. Only four percent involve provocative behavior by the victim. Nice girls don't get raped. Eighty-two percent of rape victims have good reputations.

BENSON: It isn't some funny woman walking down an alley in a short skirt at four 'o clock in the morning. It's the woman next door. It's you.

INGRIM: The poem opening the first segment of this series was taken from "The Rape Journal" by Dell Fitzgerald-Richards. This is Diane Ingrim on KMYR.

[24:35]

[end]