

November 1, 2004

Readings were Ruth Seifert's "War and Rape: A Preliminary Analysis," and Rhonda Copelon's "Surfacing Gender: Reconceptualizing Crimes against Women in Time of War," both in *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Also Erica James' "'Political Cleansing' in Haiti – 1991-1994: Gender, Sexuality, Political Violence and 'Truth,'" and Dubravka Zarkov's "The Body of the Other Man: Sexual Violence and the Construction of Masculinity, Sexuality and Ethnicity in Croatian Media," in *Victims, Perpetrators of Actors?: Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*.

All readings dealt with the issue of rape (mostly as a form of torture).

- gender as a system of symbols that map socially constructed meanings onto the facts of biological differences between sexes
- social/cultural/historical/political (etc.) representations of gender in everyday life and social institutions are inextricably linked to the proliferation of sexual and gendered forms of violence in times of peace and conflict
- conceptions of gender and sex are integral to the formation of law and the pursuit of justice (laws are socially and culturally constructed, as is gender)
- involves issues of biopolitics – power and knowledge are linked in ideals of gender
  - ☞ gender systems - ideologies that can function as stereotypes/ideals by which we are judged

Violence comes to be perceived as normal – as stated in the memo from the US to Haiti that rape was part of the local culture and that the US was suspicious of the verity of more claims of rape now

- denial of legitimate suffering
- debate over what type of violence is 'normal' or 'natural'
- the state is forced to recognize the victim and thus obligates itself to act (but most don't *want* that responsibility/obligation to do something)

Haitian gender roles – men in heavily agriculture realm with women in the domestic sphere (market too)

US imposed an embargo against Haiti that resulted in inflation and scarcity in their economy. Women in marketing had more actual power than their male counterparts, at least during the financial crisis. Thus, it became difficult to mark the public/private delineation.

1960s/1970s – *globalization of industry* – women were hired instead [for their manual dexterity that would be useful in assembling parts] instead of men

- women now had greater access to financial resources
- but women were still subject to men's will – and laws were biased to maintain male power

Systematic rape = tool of oppression

It takes time for knowledge to filter through the levels of society, so the education of the existence of one's rights does not directly translate to the ability to seek justice to preserve those rights (also due to the fact that there are numerous social constraints).

Haitian rape crisis – deserving of int'l aid despite int'l labeling as cultural practice

- situation was framed in a certain way that aspiration for rights were denied – should still take action
- issue also lies in the hierarchy of economic vs. political refugees
- how we frame things has implications on policy – how do we frame the individual in this case?

People felt that the training to achieve the extremism of campaign had been 'imported' (e.g. from US). The extremism of the campaign – of the “dirty war” raises some key questions...

- How systematic was everything?
- What were the patterns?
- Did this constitute a human rights violation?

There was a specific language used to define the *systematic* vs. *common* .

Women were depicted as the enemy, since it was an attack on the culture, and women were the pivotal unit in the perpetuation of that culture (via the home).

Women did seek help. There was cooperation between US and Haitian organizations. But they didn't want to foster a sense of dependency, though. The 'gift' circulates in its own way when it enters a community, such as through expectations, obligations, and reciprocity. The givers also have to be accountable to their sources of money (such as the US being accountable to Congress).

The regime showed the power accomplishable through violence and through the destruction of the fabric of society. But it violated human rights' law because political groups were specifically targeted in its campaigns.

But this can also be traced to the spread of democracy and US business interests in foreign markets – explaining US complacency during much of this situation.