



Asking for It: The Alarming Rise of Rape Culture and What We Can Do about It

Kate Harding

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

Asking for It: The Alarming Rise of Rape Culture and What We Can Do about It

Kate Harding

Asking for It: The Alarming Rise of Rape Culture and What We Can Do about It Kate Harding
Dominique Strauss-Kahn's arrest. Congressman Todd Akin's "legitimate" gaffe. The alleged rape crew of Steubenville, Ohio. Sexual violence has been so prominent in recent years that the feminist term "rape culture" has finally entered the mainstream. But what, exactly, is it? And how do we change it?

In *Asking for It*, Kate Harding answers those questions in the same blunt, bullshit-free voice that's made her a powerhouse feminist blogger. Combining in-depth research with practical knowledge, *Asking for It* makes the case that twenty-first century America—where it's estimated that out of every 100 rapes only 5 result in felony convictions—supports rapists more effectively than victims. Harding offers ideas and suggestions for addressing how we as a culture can take rape much more seriously without compromising the rights of the accused.

Asking for It: The Alarming Rise of Rape Culture and What We Can Do about It Details

Date : Published June 27th 2015 by Da Capo Lifelong Books (first published December 9th 2014)

ISBN : 9780738217024

Author : Kate Harding

Format : Paperback 261 pages

Genre : Feminism, Nonfiction, Politics, Gender, Gender Studies

 [Download Asking for It: The Alarming Rise of Rape Culture and Wh ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Asking for It: The Alarming Rise of Rape Culture and ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Asking for It: The Alarming Rise of Rape Culture and What We Can Do about It Kate Harding

From Reader Review Asking for It: The Alarming Rise of Rape Culture and What We Can Do about It for online ebook

Kelli says

I need a hard copy to properly review this incredible narrative. Hold, please!

Becky says

I have put off reviewing this book, despite having finished it days ago, because... reasons. There's so much I want to say and I don't even know where to start, and so many of the thoughts running through my head make me so angry and hopeless... it's just a bit daunting. But I hate having unreviewed books hanging over my head, so here goes the ramble...

I've never thought of myself as a feminist. I didn't give feminism much thought at all until very recently, honestly. I love the progress that women have made in the last century, and I want to continue it... but to me, men and women being equal just seems to be the way shit should be, and I shouldn't have to label myself as something in order to think that.

But the last few books on this topic that I've read have changed me. This is especially true of Jessica Valenti's book, *The Purity Myth*, which has made me see things so much differently. They've changed the way that I think about society, and the way that I think about men and women as groups, and the way that I think about the expectations of each. For example, one of my coworkers shared a video with me showing a Scottish father teasing his 4 or 5 year old daughter about never allowing her to have a boyfriend, and how she's going to become a nun and work for Jesus. She thought it was funny and had even tagged her husband because it reminded her of him. A month ago, and I would have thought it was hilarious - the teasing, the accents, the little girl's indignation, the father's deadpan delivery, it all worked. Now, I can see the humor on the surface, but really... it's just disturbing to me. I get that it's supposed to be a joke. I get that it's supposed to be ironic. But I can't help but see there's a dark undertone of misogyny and paternalism, and I can't help but want to be like "DON'T YOU SEE WHAT YOU'RE PERPETUATING HERE?"

But I refrain. That's the wrong way to go about it, even though I want to scream about it. I know that would just backfire and make people see the exact things that they want to see: shrill harpy, no sense of humor, militant feminist. That'd give people a reason to discount and ignore the point.

And It's not just men. Women who think that they are helping, that they are progressive and teaching their sons how to be "men", are actually doing just as much damage. They are teaching their sons that women aren't to be respected, that they are just sluts and troublemakers, etc. This, too, perpetuates this misogyny. And again... it's women teaching their sons how to do it.

An example: I see comments like this all the time, in some form or another on Facebook... *"If my son ever brought some trashy girl over, I would drag her out of the house by her hair and make sure to post a video of it so all the other little bitches know to stay away because '[boy]'s mom is crazy". "*

They say this to show that they are "protecting" their sons - as though they are the ones at higher risk of being violated. Then they go on to say how they "teach their sons to respect women". I just read that and

have to shake my head because what they are REALLY teaching their sons is how only SOME girls deserve respect, and that those who don't make the cut are just little whores who deserve to be treated like shit. The fact that these women are behaving like exactly the type of person they think they're protecting their sons from ("trash") is apparently lost on them.

sigh It's so disheartening. It's the kind of mentality that teaches boys that girls are all just sluts and whores (unless they are virginal and 100% proper in every regard) and who are, as they say, asking for it. Why should boys treat them well, when their own mothers, their main female role models, wouldn't?

It just perpetuates this myth that girls who dress a certain way, or act a certain way, or talk a certain way, or hang out with boys, or stay out late, or get high or drunk, or any number of things that anyone might do, are "trashy" and aren't real victims if they're raped. If she didn't want to be raped, she wouldn't have been doing the things that society seems to deem as "risky" behavior, after all.

Before I started this book, I thought that it would be an interesting look at society and how it deals with quote/unquote "forcible rape". You know, the "Bad Guy lurking down a dark alley, grabs a girl and rapes her" type. But this book is so much more than that. It talks about the way men are raised to see women as objects rather than people, about laws governing consent, about double standards, about the very definition of rape, victim blaming, perpetrator defending, false accusations and how hard it is to prosecute most rapes. It talks about the way that women think and behave differently in order to make their risk of being raped lower. It talks about how law enforcement often handles rape investigations incorrectly, and how TV and movies fetishize rape. It talks about rape jokes, male rape, date rape, relationship/marriage rape, "Gray" rape, "Rape" rape, and how all of these distinctions are just red herrings because rape - all rape - is simply one person taking away another's right to their bodily autonomy.

I say "simply" but it's anything but simple. I have never been "forcibly-held-down-and-raped" raped. But as I was listening to this book, I realized that some of the sexual experiences that I've had in my life actually were rape. That's a very shitty thing to realize about my life. It shows just how much rape culture has infiltrated my ideas of sex, desirability, responsibility, sexual expectations, and consent. And I think it shows how much it has affected men as well, because I can pretty much guarantee that the guys involved would swear on a stack of bibles that they didn't know that what they were doing was rape, and that they would never rape anyone. Of course, what they'd mean is that they'd never "forcibly-hold-down-and-rape" rape anyone.

A close friend of mine told me recently that during her relationship with her kids' father, he would routinely force himself on her if she wasn't in the mood for sex. She hated him for that... but she never considered it rape. She thought that since she was in a relationship, that they had kids together, and she had obviously agreed to have sex with him previously, that she couldn't be raped by him. She never mentioned it to anyone because she thought that she'd be blamed for not "putting out" enough to keep him happy, and so she hated herself, too.

It wasn't until several years after her relationship ended, and she started with a new therapist who actually named what had happened to her as "rape" that she was able to come to terms with it and started telling people. Her story broke my heart. This woman is one of my best and closest friends, and is one of the strongest, most independent people I know, and for her to suffer this way for years, repeatedly raped by the person who was supposed to love and protect her, blaming herself for it and too ashamed or afraid (or both) to tell anyone... it just killed me.

These are the ways that rape culture makes victims of us all. We live in a society where we can be routinely

violated and not even recognize that it is happening to us. We live in a society that only sees a victim if they are virginal, religious, forced at gunpoint or beaten up. We live in a society that thinks consent is a gray area, and that the failure to say no is the same as saying yes. (It's not.)

We need to do better as a society.

This book should be mandatory reading. Period.

PS. I will never listen to the song "Date Rape" the same way again.

Emma says

Just a week before I saw this book, I had a shocking moment of self-awareness. I was reading a post on an internet forum site called Reddit about someone feeling guilty about cheating on his girlfriend. A man described a night which involved him going to a female friend's house, being plied with drinks, getting completely wasted, and subsequently being persuaded into having sex with her.

My initial thought: typical guy trying to weasel out of cheating.

First comment under his post: Mate, you were raped.

Second comment switched the gender pronouns in the story. Now it read that a female had gone to a male friend's house, been plied with drinks and persuaded to have sex.

All of a sudden, it looked like sexual assault.

I was disgusted with myself. Not knowing anything about this man, or his situation, I had brushed aside his experience by forcing it to fit my stereotypical ideas about male behaviour. That he also did not see it as a sexual assault hardly made me feel better, as it suggests a larger problem in identifying appropriate/inappropriate sexual relations, even when you are the one experiencing it.

If asked, I would have said that i'm not that kind of person. That when it comes to sex, I know what's right and what's wrong, I believe everybody has the right to say no at any point, and that I would never blame the victim for the rape.

But apparently I am not who I thought I was.

With this playing on my mind, I picked up Asking for It. It's an excellent break down of how rape is conceived in society. It's something that every young person should read, that every person should read. Intellectually, I agreed with almost everything Harding was saying, but I had still been dismissive of an example of a male not being able to give real consent. Perhaps if i hadn't read that post, and come to this book with surety about my own capability to assess human behaviour intact, I would not have been as aware about how important books like this are. It makes you think about how your 'knowledge' is formed and what evidence you have for it. Why do i see something this way, and not that way? Am I wrong? How will I know? When it comes to sex, it should be simple. Has this person given consent and are they able to do so? If not, don't do it. But Harding shows the incredible lengths society goes to in order to explain away rape. Some of the examples, I'd heard before, others were new, but in concert they provide a chilling picture of men as irrational beasts who need to be stopped from raping. As for their victims, if you don't try hard enough to stop them, you deserve everything you get. The good old 'boys will be boys' idea taken to its most

extreme form.

But how to combat this pervasive gender stereotyping? I'd just proved to myself that I wasn't immune to its effects. Perhaps in reading books like this, in identifying our own patterns of thought and challenging them every time we come across a new bit of information. We have to evaluate sources everyday- in real life and on the internet- so perhaps we need to think more broadly about what we see and hear. Fact check. Look at other opinions. Look at the evidence. Have a warning sound in our minds that goes off each time we think 'oh, it's just this type of person doing this type of thing'. Just one moment of understanding can create a desire to improve ourselves for the future, it has for me.

So read this book because it displays all the ways in which rape victims are let down by society and also because it will make you think about whether you are part of the problem.

Many thanks to Kate Harding, Netgalley and Perseus Books Group for this copy in exchange for an honest review.

Ylenia says

4.5 stars

I've read my fair share of non-fiction books on feminism & gender studies but **Asking For It** was probably the one I will recommend the most. Kate Harding started with something easy - what is rape culture? what can we do about it? - and then dealt with many different topics, from destroying rape myths to why the justice system seems to work against the victims to her own personal story of rape on campus.

This book enraged me to no end, mostly because it was written a couple of years ago & pretty much nothing has changed. The way some people (not only men!) expressed themselves on the topics of rape & abortion (especially the latter) was infuriating. Ignorance mixed with privilege is a bad combo.

This book was well written, full of sarcastic comments - sarcasm is necessary, otherwise we would cry from page one because the world we live in is so fucked up - and the basic concepts are well explained. It's not a book I've read in a day but it took me a couple of months. I took my time & grabbed a pencil to underline & added a couple of personal comments. I highly encourage you to pick this one up!

KelseAwesomeness says

I just finished reading *Asking For It*, and all I can say is... "wow"... When I first picked this book up (or rather, saw the title on OverDrive because I'm an avid Ebook reader), I was curious and found the summary of the work interesting and very pertinent to events that have happened (and continue to occur). I had heard of the phrase "rape-culture" when I was in my early 20's and, while I agreed that our society was definitely guilty about cultivating this type of culture, I only had a vague sense of what that phrase meant. I had thought it just meant victim blaming ...which isn't exactly wrong per se, but it's so much more than that and this book is definitely a gold-mine of information on what rape-culture looks like, it's origins and how it has

(unfortunately) evolved with technology and the media, as well as what's being done to counteract it.

But before I go much further, I highly commend and greatly appreciate the author's way to write such a book without it being a bashing session on males and why men are evil beings. The author states, multiple times, that men aren't animals who are merely slaves to their libidos and who, at a moments notice, might just go rape somebody. Rapists are criminals who absolutely give absolutely no regard to anyone else's feelings, thoughts, and physical and/or emotional boundaries. The author oftentimes calls out both men and women when they are furthering to perpetuate rape-culture. Now, to carry one with my review.

At times this book made me realize just how much about this topic that I didn't know about and at other times I found myself nodding my head in confirmation of what I was reading because I was already aware of some of this. I was shocked and a little embarrassed because, when I was younger, I used to believe some of the rape myths that the author talks about. At one point, I had believed that if a female dressed a certain way (either scantily clad or extremely revealing) that doing so would almost... invite negativity or unwanted attention. I was young and impressionable, and I was taught to think that this was acceptable or just a way of life, and it didn't help that a lot of the television or movies I watched affirmed what I had been told. I was being influenced by rape-culture from a young age and I didn't even know it. Of course, now that I'm older, I know better. No one invites unwanted attention and most certainly no one deserves to be sexually assaulted for any reason.

I am really glad that I read this book because it was definitely an eye-opener in ways that I didn't expect when I first started reading it. I am horrified and angry about how rape or sexual assault claims or cases had been handled (and probably some that are still being handled in the same way today) in the past. It has definitely strengthened my awareness of how steeped our society is in rape-culture. Alternatively, another realization this book has made me aware of though... are all the ways that people are banding together to not only fight for justice for those who have been sexually assaulted but also the support and understanding that is sweeping over all of the sexism, hate, and automatic disbelief of female (and male) victims of rape or sexual assaults. It is inspiring to see that there are support groups and the like on college campuses and on the internet and, increasingly, that there is a massive steamrolling train of backlash for anyone who is simply accepting rape-culture as "daily life" or something that "just happens" and not questioning and doing something about this injustice.

I could go on and on about this book, but then you would miss out on the great, and tasteful, way that Kate Harding writes about this topic... and so on that note, I'll just highly recommend that everyone should read this book.

Mark says

I read this book and got what I expected - this is a very important book.

The basis here is to open our eyes to the stereotypical 'rape'. Society (although learning and developing) still holds an outdated view that rape is a sexual assault by the guy hiding in the bushes, knife in hand who leaps onto the unsuspecting 19yo blonde who is enjoying a jog through the park at night.

As highlighted by the book there are two flaws with this stereotype. Firstly rapes occur during daylight hours, without weapons, to all ages, both sexes and people of all appearances. They occur in the home, at

friend's houses, at schools and workplaces but so often overlooked, they occur between people who know each other. They may have had a previous sexual relationship, may be on a first date, may be long time friends having too many drinks or may even in fact be a current couple or married. And this is the second flaw of the above mentioned stereotype - rape does not have to be between strangers. Does not have to be some disgustingly horny guy who will take sex from anyone he can get it from. Rape is when a person does not want sexual activity - and that is all activity not just penetration.

98+% of us (hopefully) have read the previous paragraph and said "well yes I know that and respect that". This book highlights the neanderthals who are still living in a bygone era where sex is the right of the guy and any woman who refuses it is surely a feminist lesbian.

Written by Kate Harding, a proud and prominent feminist who has written on many a blog and has attributed to other works on this subject. Yes Kate is a feminist but is also married to a man - just to dispel the 'feminist lesbian' ideal. Having said that who cares if she or others are feminist lesbians? Firstly there is NOTHING wrong with that and secondly does that mean they are wrong and rape is ok? NO IT DOES NOT!!

This book is all about the struggles to get all rapes defined as rapes. To eradicate the stupid and appalling excuses - she was drunk, she was asking for it, she was practically naked etc.

As you can see I have given this book 5 stars because to me it deserves 4.5 stars but is too important to drop to 4 stars. I take a half star off just for something I disagree with in Kate's book.

Towards the start of the book Kate is talking about reactions from police departments and communities to rapes and other sexual assaults. The overwhelming responses were - you were wearing slutty clothes, you should not have been out so late, you had too much to drink, you had agreed to go back to his house and the like. These are never excuses for rape and to this point I am 100% in agreement. Police advise women to take self defense classes to which Kate raises the concern of "moving responsibility". Why should women be forced to take such measures, why is it their responsibility? Surely the onus should be on the perpetrator to be human and not force themselves onto others. So far still 100% with you!!

Where I vary is this - I would not like a dangerous precedent set here. Absolutely the responsibility falls on the perpetrator and the victim is totally blameless. However that changes nothing because if these disgusting low life scum wish to assault and rape I believe they still will. No punishment has ever eradicated rape or even murder so expecting them to take responsibility seems a moot point to me. Victims should never have to be victims but if it gets to the point where it is happening by all means lash out and fight. And this is why I still value self defense classes for anyone who could possibly find themselves in this situation.

Not forgetting of course that some still believe history, such as a previous sexual relationship, means that current circumstances do not constitute rape. That being said is a simple 'NO' going to get through? I am sorry if I misinterpreted your book Kate and if I did you are welcome to claim the missing half star.

Marjorie Ingall says

Terrific. Don't even read my review, just go buy this fucker right now.

Are you still here?

OK.

I am old enough to remember the Madge the Manicurist "You're soaking in it!" commercials (shut up), and this book reminded me of Madge's sly yet perky assertion: We really ARE immersed in it, with "it" in this case being a culture that devalues women. And their stories of assault, yes...but more than that, their legitimacy as people with agency, as humans who are more than decorative. Our DEFAULT STATE, culturally, is to figure out how to blame the victim.

Harding is a very, VERY funny writer, which helps make a difficult subject readable. Asking for It is a polemic that does not read like a polemic. Harding comes off as a reliable narrator as well as your most amusing friend. (Full disclosure, I know her online but have only met her in person a couple of times.) (Incidentally, I had a great OMG-I-LOVE-THIS-VOICE non-fiction week, between Asking for It and Sarah Hepola's Blackout.)

Asking For It is, for me, the first great bloggy non-fiction. It is rigorously researched, but delivered in a snarky voice that I think of as a blog-writer voice. Usually over the length of a book this kind of voice wears thin for me -- too much, too snide, too self-impressed, too clever. The fact that Harding blends her conversational, smart-alecky, snarktastic tone with a BUTTLOAD of statistics and sources -- and she never goes for a joke at the EXPENSE of propelling forward her argument -- makes it work like aces.

And this voice makes Asking For It a great read for teenagers and twenty somethings, into whose hands I want to shove this book right this very second. Guys and girls both. (Harding absolutely talks about the negative impact of rape culture on DUDES as well as women.) I also want to give it to older feminists -- including my own GenX cohort -- who default to "but WHY do young women today...." because you know what? My friends and the prominent older feminists who use this phrase have not internalized the fact that no matter what the kids today are wearing, no matter how much they drink, no matter how dumb you think they are for being so careless...you are demonizing the WRONG PARTY. Rape culture means blaming the victim, and that is precisely what you are doing. When you start a sentence with "of course no one DESERVES to be raped..." you have started with the WRONG DEPENDENT CLAUSE, pumpkin. What you have delivered should be a stand-alone sentence. Put a period there. Oh and dump the "of course" which implies a big ol' BUT.

On FB Kate Harding taught me Lewis's Law (the Internet says Lewis' Law but I am ancient and prissy enough to correct the Internet's grammar): "Comments on any article about feminism justify feminism." I don't think this law appears in the book, but reading the responses to every single article about this book, which invariably talk about how Harding deserves to be raped, wishes she were raped, is too ugly to be raped, etc. are proof positive of how essential this book is.

Also: My 13-year-old read this before I did and handed it back saying "This is the best non-fiction book I have read in a long time. Maybe ever."

If you are the parent of a high school student who dwells in the actual real world that humans live in, he or she should read this and talk about it with you. Do not say "Let kids be kids a little longer!" Your kid, in all likelihood, will not be shocked by any of the stories in the book, but rather by the fact that there is a NAME for the systemic problems he or she knows exist.

(OH. This week I also read a super-lauded social-issues-oriented non-fiction book AIMED at teenagers, one that's being bandied about as a possible Newbery-Award-winner, and it was SO MUCH WEAKER and more boring and less thoughtful about race and class than Asking For It.)

So get it.

Ivie ☆Born to Magic-Forced to Muggle☆ says

This book was written in a form of a high school essay albeit a long winded one. Take someone else's work, quote – elaborate on it some and call it a day....Still the topic is well worth the time and effort of reading it, and I must say the review below is not short. In fact when you see it you'll most probably be like:

My answer – you fucking should be.

The cases described in this book are for the large part extremely well known cases, and in my opinion have been covered in better ways and from more angles by other people. I was expecting something innovative, at least a fresh approach, but the author didn't deliver anything that hasn't already been said by someone else. It did however present an accumulation of different points to present her case.

Rape culture is extremely real and although the author specifies the first time that it has been socially recognized as an ongoing widespread problem (by her accounting a few decades ago) the truth is women and men that didn't fit the certain socially desirable parameters of a virile, competent, manly male were targets of societal harassment throughout the ages. Assertion of sexual dominance still appeals to the animal side of humanity, as psychology will vouch for, no matter how hard we try to polish out the outer shell with the guise of civilization. As you grow in life you will be more and more aware that people are essentially not nice. They just talk more shit and pretend more in front of other people. The author herself couldn't have said it any better – Why in a culture that is so publicly outraged by sexual assault are so little advancements made to combat it and so few perpetrators behind bars? - **Because in essence we are full of shit.**

Social justice and it's ever-growing internet presence never seems to manage to get past social media rants and accusations of whomever isn't chanting the expected buzzwords. Very few people actually get their asses off their couches and out in the horrid world to make a change. But hey, they will sure as shit flay you alive if you say something that might be considered offensive to a minority they don't have to necessarily be a part of or even have to know anything about. It's not about what you DO, it has become more about what you SAY to the nameless, faceless mob of catchy usernames. Sexual assault has become a fucking hashtag. Rape is a buzz word. People's opinions on the matter seem to somehow be more important than being active in your community. ->To all the would be trolls that read this and get offended??? Blow it out your ass! On this subject I am

Truth is that people have become fearful of even questioning some things that are a hot topic in case they get prosecuted and bullied on social media. Remember Cecil the Lion? And the shrine? The dentist is a scumbag and should definitely face a penalty, but the bunch of idiots in front of his office that were out with the monologues about how animal life is sacred concluded their day by patting each other on the back and going out on a well deserved hamburger. You know, from a cow someone's slaughtered, so they can eat and stretch it's hide to wear trendy shoes. But hey – it's on Facebook so you gotta be seen to have the heart of gold, and those morals ripe enough to choke a horse...because animal life is sacred - *Seems legit*

As this book was about rape culture I was expecting quite a long elaborate piece on how our culture faces and presents the woman of the 21st century. You know- in everyday life. I was interested to see her take on

the clash of modern feminists like herself and other popular female influences that proudly display their bodies in all it's glory and support the idea that a woman shouldn't be labelled for loving her body or the choice of her clothes (I am referring to pop culture), versus some other extremely popular feminist influences in modern culture like Anita Sarkeesian that say that by doing that women indulge in male sexual fantasies and are in fact not empowering themselves rather covertly trying to win male approval and by doing so perpetuate rape culture. Do you see where I am going with this??? Modern feminism sure as shit sends some mixed signals and no matter what your opinion is – if you voice it - somebody will tell you what an ignorant backward imbecile you are for having it.

When 50 Shades of Grey hit the shelves the world went mental, frothing at the mouth about rape culture. They were getting ready to lynch E.L. James for writing BDSM. Here's the thing -her book was ok, but as far as written erotica goes not that innovative, groundbreaking, earth-shattering or soul-splitting. In fact written erotica has a full sub-genre dedicated to dubious consent novels. Some of those would make E.L. James herself scramble for her smelling salts. Majority of those writers -are women, and majority of the readers of those novels – are women. So there is a demand for such fiction. A small example can be found here and as you can see the novel carries the exact same name as this particular work. The question I wanted to see addressed in this book was how far are people ready to push and limit freedom of speech, therefore the freedom of art itself for the sake of social justice? When you watch a TV show it is considered sufficient to have a warning of content at the beginning and people are left to their own devices. Nobody is judging your intelligence to process the content. You know it's a show. So why are other forms of art and entertainment held to different standards?

It is becoming painfully obvious that some feminist movements want to ban certain way of depicting women. Sexually submissive, provocatively dressed or sexually healthy women seem to have no more space in modern popular culture as more and more pressure is applied on artists in various branches of art to produce the more politically correct, conservatively dressed heroines that don't offend the delicate little feminine flowers on the consuming end. If we continue on that road the world will get nothing but similar content, viewed through pink tinted glasses and **the true problem of rape culture will remain.** In fact it can only be worse because of limited speech. On the other side of the argument we have some truly important influences of young minds like pop stars, reality stars, movie and tv actors that seem to compete as to who can be seen in a more revealing outfit and proclaim that a woman's body is not to be shamed. Should we start burning books and demonizing creators of content that might possibly offend? Or should we work on educating people and allowing them the human courtesy by deeming them intelligent enough to understand what is in front of them and not openly assume that they are so limited in their understanding of right or wrong that they need someone e.i. you to filter the content.

These are only a few of the questions I wanted to read about once I started reading this book. They all relate to rape culture and modern feminism. None of them were truly answered. While reading it I stumbled on more issues I personally would like to talk about in depth but this is not a confessional. The rating for this book is this low simply because I have expected the author to bring more of herself to the pages, as it stood it just added a little to other people's work and read like a report.

Liz says

Warning: The book discusses rape, sexual assault, harassment (in a rather graphic manner) and I suspect that it can seriously trigger some people, so while I recommend it - proceed with caution.

This is a very important book, regardless whether you, as a reader, live in the United States of America, Canada, UK, or any other country. Of course, it does concern itself with cases that happened in the USA and focuses solely on e.g. statistics of English-speaking countries but a) the reader is warned about it at the beginning and b) the problems that it lists are, unfortunately, pretty similar everywhere. I am rather confident that if one digs into problems and laws regarding rape and/or sexual assault one will find issues and laws and statements that are not any less problematic than the ones listed here in every country. This is simply the reality we live in.

But for now, about the book. It is cohesive, succinct, easy to understand because it is written in plain, non-academic English and partially even uses slang, and it features the most important issues regarding rape culture while also explaining, in a very understandable manner, what rape culture is, what encourages it and what we can do against it. It addresses stereotypes, issues with the police and rape kits, and generally a variety of different topics linked to rape. All of them important. All of them deeply disturbing since apparently women are still oftentimes seen as objects rather than actual human beings.

There are also digressions into topics linked to it like, for example, internet trolls and man's rights activist (this shit is plain disgusting). I have never had to deal either, thanks to any deity who listens, but I certainly witnessed enough seriously disconcerting comments from *surprise* men particularly in the gaming area. Still, it was very enlightening.

I think it's a must-read for everyone, nowadays. **Highly recommended.**

P.S. Just in case you're curious (as I was), and NOT from the USA, look up the rape statistics in your country/area. What I encountered when I ventured into the topic of rape in Germany left me shocked and deeply concerned about the future.

Alienor ✕ French Frowner ✕ says

*"For as much as feminists are painted as "man-haters", **we're not the ones suggesting that boys and men lack the ability to think rationally, control their own behavior, or act kindly toward other human beings - even with a boner.** We're the ones who want all of our children to know about meaningful consent, healthy sexuality, and honoring each other's bodies and boundaries, **instead of teaching them that one gender is responsible for managing the other's helpless animal lust.**"*

Upon reading Asking for It, I was primarily faced with this question : **Is it the right time to read this, when the news are already so fucking bleak every day?** And then I realized that maybe there was *no such thing* as a "right time". I'm not gonna lie, all this hateful climate in the news affects me, and friends often tell me - with good intentions - that I shouldn't let offensive, idiotic (either political or ethical) decisions or statements hurt me. But the thing is, I hope I will never say, *hey, that sucks, but that's how things are.*

I welcome my anger and sadness because no, they're not sterile.

They mean that I, as an individual, do not agree with the bullshit I hear or read.

They mean that I, as an individual, do not accept the permanence or even pertinence of such statements.

They mean that **even though I look pessimistic as hell, there must be some part of me who's optimistic**

enough to say that no, it's not okay and yes, we can change it.

While I may go through pessimistic stages, I don't want these stages to help spread *bullshit*. Take teachers, for example (I am one, so no, I'm not choosing a category of people to blame - I merely talk about what is more familiar to me) : before meeting your new class for the year, you'll often find a teacher* to tell you that,

" You know, you can't do anything more for X. Don't bother trying."

X being that kid, in the back row, who often faces several learning disorders that either are a)not diagnosed or b)blatantly ignored when they're not c)mocked, or even d)dismissed as laziness or provocation (because not being able to spell would look like a provocation for a child. REALLY)

I wish I was generalizing.

So, let's come back to this statement : *You can't do anything more for this kid*. This 9 YEARS OLD kid (or even younger - often younger, actually).

Appalling, right? We can agree on that, right?

The thing is : **for me, when it comes to rape culture, people's reaction often follows the same pattern, as if traditions (more like myths) were set in tables of stone and that our society would never ever change because we *can't* change it.** Well. On that I'll give the same answer than I do when people argue that we should wait for industrials to take full responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions** before considering making adjustments in our personal lives :

- 1) Do you live on Earth?
- 2) Can you change something in your lifestyle - even a detail - that would reduce your ecological footprint?

Yeah? So WHY DON'T YOU. As with rape culture, it also revolves around a vicious circle that gives industrials and politics the opportunity they need to say - SEE! PEOPLE DON'T CARE! WHY SHOULD WE?***

When we refuse to acknowledge the existence of these issues, we're basically telling people who break the law a billion times that they can go on because we really *do not care*. Of course, as I said, everybody can participate in its own way and I'm not saying that everybody should read that book or follow that blog or watch that documentary because that would be annoying. I'm not saying that I'm perfect either, and that I know everything, because it would make me a liar (and also, a lousy human being).

"Rape is a thing that happens, sure, but it's not really something people *do*. Certainly, not that nice boy, that star quarterback, that beloved priest, that trusted babysitter, that troop leader, that teacher, that dear family friend.

It's as though none of us ever learned about "passive voice" in freshman comp. *She was raped. Local woman raped. Girl, 11, raped in an abandoned trailer.* Who's doing all the raping here? Incubi? If nobody's actually committing rape, how are we supposed to address it as a public health and safety issue?

Oh, right, by giving women endless lists of acceptable behaviors and warnings about personal responsibility, for as long as it takes until those dummies get it together and quit becoming victims."

- I love her sarcastic voice.

It can be telling that asshole over there that nope, groping women's breasts is not remotely funny. Neither it is normal, or inherent to male genetics (how can ANY man agree with that without feeling denigrated is beyond me). We need decent bystanders. Male AND female.

"In the meantime, though, it's worth remembering that in every one of the gang rapes I wrote about earlier in the chapter, there were not just people who participated and people who watched : there were also people who walked away, not wanting to be a part of it yet somehow not feeling empowered to stop it."

It can be answering a parent who tells you that his daughter sucks at Maths (or his son sucks at creative writing) because "you know, girls and Maths" that no, *you really do not know*.

It can be refusing slut-shaming as a rule including in a work of fiction because we can never separate reality and fiction entirely. Bullshit sure doesn't fear boundaries.

It can be teaching your kids that education is important because *no, neither vaginas nor ovulation can "shut down" in case of rape*.

It can be calling people on their shit when they propagate a Rape Myth like, "she asked for it" or "she is lying" (or he, in the case of a man being raped) or "sleep means consent" or "a victim must behave in a certain way" etc.

"Imagine if every pedestrian who reported being hit by a car were thoroughly investigated for evidence of suicidality, while the driver's claim of "I didn't see him there" would be reason enough to drop any charges."

It can be so many things.

What I'm merely saying is : **admittedly, Asking for It won't be ground-breaking for you if you read a few books about rape culture before**, because most of the facts and studies here have already been discussed elsewhere. Sometimes, though, this is not what matters to me. Sometimes what matters to me is that *somebody cares - somebody tries*.

And you know what? Things ARE changing. At a snail pace, sure, but they *are*. My little sister is way more informed on rape culture than I was at her age (and it's an understatement, really). It's not much, but it's SOMETHING, and if we dismiss these little progressions we are basically saying that it's a lost cause.

I am not remotely okay with saying that fighting rape culture is a lost cause.

"But if you've been alive longer than a few years on planet Earth, you have some ability to recognize bullshit. You should feel free to use it."

* You'll also find many teachers who will not buy that bullshit, fortunately.

** Granted, if you think that global warming is a scam created by the vile scientists around the world because of REASONS (?!?!?), then my argument won't speak to you.

*** This rhetoric is often presented as "blaming individuals". Again, it's not the point. It doesn't mean industrials and governments don't have anything to do, or that individual responsibility is greater - it only means that if we're going to argue that we're sensible *adults*, we should well start acting like ones.

For more of my reviews, please visit:

Erin says

ARC for review from NetGalley.

I don't want to say "easy to read" but an excellent, largely non-academic look at rape culture in the United States. Incredibly timely (the Bill Cosby scandal and the *Rolling Stone*/UVA. campus rape article were in the news when she was going to press), there's a lot here that readers already know, but it's presented in a clear, concise way that makes it a perfect teaching tool for both ourselves and others.

As Harding initially notes, rape culture exists in many forms, "but its most devilish trick is to make the average, noncriminal person identify with the person accused, instead of the person reporting a crime," and we've seen this over and over again, from cases famous (Glen Ridge, New Jersey (and if you haven't read the incredible *Our Guys* by please do so), and Steubenville, Ohio) to ones with which I was totally unfamiliar (an eleven year old(!) girl in Cleveland, Texas as gang raped by over twenty men. The defense portrayed her as a girl who had developed early, liked to wear makeup and didn't have much parental supervision....which, in his mind, was enough to lead to reasonable doubt. One defense attorney even said, " 'Wasn't she saying, 'Come into my parlor, said the spider to the fly?'" to which Harding responds, "actually, I think it was more like, 'come into my parlor,' said the sixth grader to the group of older boys and men, who would take turns penetrating her vaginally and anally in an abandoned trailer, while someone filmed it with phone. More than once. Tomayto, tomahto" (this may be the point where I fell in love with Kate Harding.

But her point is apt - if our police/judicial system can't even agree that an ELEVEN YEAR OLD gang rape victim wasn't "asking for it," what hope for the rest of us? She then recounts the seven categories of American rape myths (the book focuses primarily on America....obviously laws, mores and cultures are so different in many other countries this would be an encyclopedia) identified by psychologists Payne, Lonsway and Fitzgerald:

1. She asked for it.
2. It wasn't really rape.
3. He didn't mean to.
4. She wanted it.
5. She lied.
6. Rape is a trivial event.
7. Rape is a deviant event.

Harding then applies these myths to various scenarios, but it's nothing that most of us can't do in our own heads a hundred times over. Americans are perfectly willing to accept the stranger who jumps out of the bushes and attacks a young co-ed scenario, but when it's the boys on the local football team, or an aspiring divinity student (the St. Paul case going on as I type), or a beloved teacher or coach or whatever our brains just don't work the same way.

Another great point - we teach our daughters to protect themselves, but we must also teach our sons not to become rapists. Males, ALL males, from the time they are ready to know the facts of life, must understand the meaning and nature of consent...and she/he can't consent when she's sleeping, passed out, too drunk to know what's happening, etc. "'Making women the sexual gatekeepers and telling men they just can't help themselves not only drives home the point that women's sexuality is unnatural, but also sets up a disturbing dynamic in which women are expected to be responsible for men's sexual behavior,'" (Valenti) and that, my friends, is bullshit. So a woman at a bar should only be able to have two drinks because men just can't control themselves? Ugh.

There's so much more to say. Harding takes both conservative and those allegedly more liberal media to task and also takes a hard line on mens rights activists (let me just say that these aren't the guys banging on drums in the woods), but my review might be as long as the book if I keep touching on every passage I marked.

And before you lose all faith in humankind, Harding includes some reasons to be hopeful. However, it really all starts with changing the culture, and that requires that ALL of us examine our behavior - and it's not easy.

Excellent book. Highly recommended. I have to read Jon Krakauer's *Missoula* for by book club, so I'm going to need some light reading between the two.

Genia Lukin says

This book started, for me, when I got sick of the "wrongs of feminism" and "legal inequality" line of comments on various internet sites that shall forever go unnamed.

It's all about how feminism's past its time, you see, and how feminists are just coming up with imaginary problems, how entitled and petty they are, and if they were living in the third world, they'd know what *real* inequality and abuse were.

Right.

The notion that feminism's job is "done" somehow - that Western society, at least, achieved a state in which women have nothing to complain about - is immensely appealing, and it appeals precisely to those elements that are the most problematic. If everything's fine and dandy, then of course we can post porn on internet message boards, make crude offensive jokes, and keep our media portrayals precisely where they are.

That notion - that we are "okay", and that what's happening with the culture is "okay, is precisely the one that Kate Harding wants to eviscerate. And she does, believe me, she does. By the time you're done with this book, assuming you are not inclined to dismiss her proof entirely as the result of "having an agenda", which I have seen some people do, you will be quite convinced that the enlightened, egalitarian, feminist Western world has a long way to go yet.

One of the most widespread arguments I encounter in the feminism-is-problematic crowd is that when an ambiguous situation occurs - usually a specific and very fringe hypothetical, but let's not go there - the onus of responsibility in terms of legality somehow lands on the man. That may be so (I would not necessarily agree that it is so, but let's put that aside for now), but *Asking For It* is not a book about legality, it's a book about all the wonderful things that happen beyond the strict letter of the law. It's a book about the cops, the juries, the opinionated (sometimes very) judges, about the public, the families, the victims and perpetrators themselves.

It makes a vehement case for the fact that our society still treats women's bodies like property, and women's lives with tremendous double-standards.

If the book has any flaws at all, it is perhaps that it is just a little *too* vehement. Any lack of immediate consent is rape. Any casual familiarity and neglect to ensure total, full, absolute autonomy is denial of human rights. Any clouding of judgment is an absolute barrier.

Life does and should allow for more ambiguity and softer blurrier lines than that, and just because something technically falls under the definition of 'illegal' doesn't necessarily mean it's bad. On the other hand, I understand where Harding is coming from. In an ideal world where we would no longer live in a society that treated women with appalling levels of double-standard and rape as a violation of someone's purity, rather than their autonomy, sure, we could cede our autonomy if we liked, we could blur the lines, we could distinguish between illegal and bad.

But in our society today, Harding's vehemence is well-placed, deserved, and necessary.

If you are one of the people who thinks our society's perfect, this book will probably make you angry, but then, you probably deserve to be angry. If you're not, it will still make you angry - that is its job. Read it.

Ian Wood says

This is the complete review as it appears at my blog dedicated to reading, writing (no 'rithmetic!), movies, & TV. Blog reviews often contain links which are not reproduced here, nor will updates or modifications to the blog review be replicated here. Graphic and children's reviews on the blog typically feature two or three images from the book's interior, which are not reproduced here.

Note that I don't really do stars. To me a book is either worth reading or it isn't. I can't rate it three-fifths worth reading! The only reason I've relented and started putting stars up there is to credit the good ones, which were being unfairly uncredited. So, all you'll ever see from me is a five-star or a one-star (since no stars isn't a rating, unfortunately).

The problem with this book is that the people who need most to read it will not, and if they mistakenly happen upon it, they will dismiss it as "more feminist propaganda". It's an uncomfortable experience to read it, but I think people need to read it until they get beyond discomfort and get downright angry that this crap not only goes on in 2015, but that it evidently doesn't even cause widespread outrage. The problem is that when people are talking about "rape-rape" (like it's a baby topic that no real grown-ups waste their time with), or about "legitimate rape" or about "the rape thing", then you know as well as I do that despite recent progress, there's still a hell of a long way to go. That's what's disturbing.

What also outraged me is that this didn't show up in the first page of results on Goodreads. Asking For It is evidently a really poorly-chosen title because Goodreads showed over 500 screens of titles that were triggered when I typed that in. Even when I typed in the author's name it was second in a long list! The title is even one in a fictional series, which reportedly attempts to retro-justify rape - because she liked it in the end. What the hell kind of a fantasy that is, and how dangerous is it? That's rape culture in all its shabby glory.

The book explores the topic of rape in civilian and in military life, and how rape culture (which the author defines) enables rapists and does serious injustice to those who are raped, to the point where those who have gone through this horror can be even more victimized by the aftermath than they were by the original atrocity itself. Even to the point where survivors have subsequently been charged with a crime - essentially charged with the 'crime' of reporting it!

That's not to say it was all plain sailing. I had some issues with the way this was written. For example, the author does explore the wider implications of a rape culture, but nowhere near enough for me, and in nowhere near enough detail, especially for a book that is specifically about the rape culture rather than specifically cases of rape. She covers, for example, the absurd clamoring of celebrities to support other celebrities - such as those who came out for rapist Roman Polansky who ostensibly couldn't distinguish between a thirteen-year-old and a consenting adult, and others like Bill Cosby and people from other celebrity ventures like the sporting world where victims aren't even given a sporting chance in popular reporting.

Having said that, she fails to address the wider picture (except briefly in passing, and tangentially) of the whole culture we live in - the movies, the video games, the comic books, the novel, the TV shows. Yes, she briefly covers some of them, but briefly isn't sufficient in a book like this which is supposedly aimed at this very problem. Rape culture isn't just rape victims getting a raw deal and rapists getting a good deal - it's the entire ethos of how women are treated and viewed in society and I felt this got short shrift.

Another issue I personally had is that the author's tone felt a bit preachy and strident at times and thereby at risk of undermining a really strong case. In this kind of environment, lists didn't help as much as they ought, and her love of lists to me was counter-productive to her aim. I'm not a fan of lists and regimented structures because life is neither, and neither are personal interactions except in crappy rom-coms. Once you start relying on a fixed list, you're in danger of missing things that are important but have failed to make the "official list". One list which I felt which was particularly confusing at best was the first one, on page 14. Clearly the author fully expects us to answer "No", but the lists are full of ambiguity which, to someone who is not clued in (and no rapist is, by definition) is going to miss, or misinterpret.

This goes to what I've been saying about taking wise precautions, and about making a "No" quite clear. Yes, lack of clear consent means no, that's a given, and yes, even a clear and unequivocal no has indeed failed to stop rapists, but given the pervasiveness of rape culture, a lack of a clear "No!" has also been used to try to muddy the waters in rape cases. A clear "No!" will cut that off at the knees. Remember, we are not dealing with an ideal society here. We're not even dealing with a rational one, much less a victim-friendly one. Here we're dealing with one which facilitates criminals getting away with rape the bulk of the time. You simply cannot play fair in that environment. You're a fool if you think you can hold out any hope that a rapist will be reasonable, considerate, nuanced, decent, or amenable to argument or persuasion.

I'm not even sure what the author was trying to demonstrate, but let's look at the list:

1. I'd love to, but I already have plans.
2. Sweet of you to offer, but I'm afraid I won't be able to make it.

3. Oh geez, maybe another time?

4. I so wish I could!

Not one of these actually says no (not that this means 'yes', understand!). If you're sensitive, which rapists are not, you will suspect that this person does not want to be involved with you, but even so you may feel free to ask again at some point, because you want to be sure, and because the answers equivocated at best and invited a "return match" at worst. Indeed, three of them say the opposite of no: "I'd love to", "Maybe another time?", and "I so wish I could!". Einstein is often quoted as saying something along the lines of "You cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war," which is nonsensical, but it's that kind of approach which is being pursued here. Rather than give an unequivocal "No!", the person in question here has offered what might well be seen as an "invitation" to further predation from those who are given to viewing women as prey and are blind to subtlety. Even those who are not predators are at risk of being thoroughly confused by such ambiguous answers.

If you have no intention of becoming involved with a guy, you do not say you'd love to! You do not offer another (what may be seen as an) opportunity to stalk you. You do not utter wishes that you could be together. You do not use the word "afraid" in your response. You say "No!" It's better to be perceived as rude than to offer what a potential pest at best and rapist at worst will see as weakness, equivocation, or invitation.

If you like, you can soften it with "I'm involved with someone" or "I don't want to be involved with anyone here" or whatever, but don't omit the clear "No!". Having given that, you are in no doubt as to whether you "encouraged" someone, and neither are they - if they are even remotely reasonable. If the worst happens, you will be confident you made it crystal clear that your answer was no, and you will not be haunted with concern that you somehow "encouraged" this guy. Rape is god-awful enough without bringing self-doubt and self-recrimination into it, on top of whatever other horrors you're going through.

On this same topic, it bothered me that on some occasions the author appeared to be disparaging rape prevention advice and campaigns by presenting an anecdote which "proved" all the advice was wrong. Yes, in an ideal society, women should not have to do these things. It's reprehensible that they're forced into this position, but the fact is that we do not live in an ideal society, and we're a long - probably impossible, I'm sorry to say - way from ever getting there, so until and unless we do live in that ideal society, the advice isn't wrong and people are foolish not to take it and follow it.

It's like saying that it's foolish to wear a seat belt, because there are some occasions where the seat belt has been the problem - the victim died anyway, or the seat belt trapped them in the car. Indeed, I was once trapped in the back seat of a car fortunately not due to an accident, but because the car was old and the seat belt was shitty. We had to find some scissors and cut me out! Did I give up wearing seat belts because of this fail? Absolutely not. This doesn't mean that a victim who has failed to take this advice is the problem and no crime has been committed. Far from it. There has still been a crime and the victim's lack of forethought isn't a mitigating circumstance by any stretch of the imagination, no matter how hard the police or the commanding officer, or courts might dishonestly pretend it is - because of this rape culture. But there are nonetheless ways in which, regardless of whether we're talking about rape or any other crime, you can endeavor protect yourself from harm and it's just plain stupid not to heed them.

They're not guaranteed, by any means, and they will at times fail despite the best efforts, but on balance, they will make women and men safer, and this author's single-minded focus on the need to address the rapist problem, not the victim non-problem, commendable and accurate as that approach is, did a disservice to prevention in a society where it is a real a present danger, as they say. It's this evident inability on the author's part to separate the wheat from the chaff which for me weakened the message she was bringing - a

message which is long overdue.

By that I don't mean it invalidated it, but I think it served to tint water which could have been clearer. For example, I would have liked to have seen the author outright condemn binge-drinking for an assortment of reasons, but because her focus was solely on rape, she tended to gloss over this problem because, it seemed to me, she felt it took away from her message that even if the person who was raped was drunk, she was still the victim of a crime and this does not mitigate the rapist's criminal behavior. This is unarguably true to anyone with half a functioning brain, which rapists and anyone else who buys into the rape culture quite evidently doesn't have, but more instead of addressing the real and unarguable issue

In the same vein, I would have liked her to have talked about educating men not to be criminals rather than zero in on the narrow field of educating them not to be rapists. That needs to be a distinct and pronounced part of such an education, but there needs to be a wider focus.

There are also issues with the prevalence of rape, which I admit is a doomed thing to try and calculate given how little of it goes reported because of the very fact that we do live in a rape culture. Numbers are tossed around without very much verification, so we end up with a one in five or a one in four number which then becomes folklore without anyone going back to see how that number was arrived at in the first place. Lisak's 2002 study was evidently flawed. We can see how hazy the numbers are by looking at this article on the Drew Sterrett / CB "affair" which is well covered by the author. "...a reported sexual assault rate of 0.03 percent" Even multiplied by ten that's a far cry from one in five.

The Sterret case is interesting not only in and of itself, but also because it makes it clear that not all cases of rape (or in this case alledged rape) are about power. This one clearly was not. And neither is the power always with the guy - in this case the power to ruin his life was clearly in his supposed victim's hands.

In a 1996 study, researchers at the Medical University of South Carolina set out to determine the rape-related pregnancy rate in the United States. They estimated that about 5 percent of rape victims of reproductive age (12 to 45) become pregnant — a percentage that results in about 32,000 pregnancies each year. If 5% become pregnant and that's 32,000 per year, it's an atrocity, but that's not what I want to address here. Multiplying that 32K by 20, should give us 100% of rape victims, which is 640,000 annual rapes. Even one is too many but over half a million is phenomenal and shocking beyond polite words.<.p> Reading elsewhere, we get this number: "...there were overall 173,610 victims of rape or sexual assault, or 0.1% of the US population 12 or older in 2013". That's a far cry from 640,000, unless of course 466,390 failed to report the crime - but that's entirely possible. Elsewhere still, we learn that according to RAIIN, every 107 seconds, someone in the United States is sexually assaulted. There is a yearly average of 293,000 victims we're told, but a rape every 107 seconds comes to 294,729. This is good enough to fall in with that average, but it's a far cry from either 640,000 or 173,610.

My point is not to belittle the magnitude of the numbers, which regardless of which number is most accurate, are appalling, but to point out that the numbers vary wildly, and this is the kind of thing which will be the very one that nay-sayers latch upon to try to call "the rape thing" into question. Look," they will claim, "they're making wild guesses! No one knows, clearly they're making this all up as a scare tactic!" Obviously that's blind nonsense, but that doesn't mean that it would not help to get better, more reliable numbers, because quoting poorly substantiated or discrepant numbers isn't going to do anyone any favors. A look, in this book, at the accuracy and sources of the numbers would have been appreciated, and while the author touches on this more than once, she never really pursues it as a legitimate topic in its own right. We do not want to give those who would continue to try and sweep this rape culture pandemic under the carpet any ammunition even if they're firing blanks.

I like that the author covers the fact that while the overwhelming number of rapes is indeed male on female, rape isn't just male on a female. It's very much cross-gender despite the British rather Victorian idea that girls can't rape guys. I liked the discussion of the focus on college versus focus on 'civilian' rape, but this was a relatively short book and the author obviously could not go into great detail on every topic. Focus on college is important, but in one way it's a bit of a mis-focus because college female students are only about half as likely as non-college females of the same age range to be affected by violence:

<http://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-se...>

<http://yaledailynews.com/blog/2014/11...>

That doesn't mean it's not a problem, by any means, but it does mean we can be smarter, use better resources, and be more effective across all areas, instead of focusing on one and pretending we're addressing the problem.

I like that the author called into question some of the at best ill-advised, and at worst, situation-exacerbating ad campaigns aimed at reducing rape, but done in a wrong-headed manner. The problem isn't so much those, however, as the very effective ad campaigns which are aimed in the opposite direction, and which flood our senses throughout our lives almost subliminally. Indeed, they are so pervasive and so common and so readily available that we don't even consider them, much less talk about them.

This is why, for me, where this book most fell down is in its almost complete failure to address the far more widespread, and often very subtle rape culture problem: that which shamelessly pervades TV, advertising, movies, and literature. The author did cover, briefly and in a limited way, some movies and some TV, and even took a very small dip into advertising, but nowhere near enough. In my opinion, it's in these areas that rape culture is seeded, because it is all-pervasive and it hits men and women alike from childhood. Note that I am not saying here that some guy watches a TV show or sees a commercial, and suddenly is filled with the idea that he can simply go out and rape him some women! It doesn't work like that. But when you have, for example in movies, been subjected to a lifetime of stories where the tough hombre battles the odds and is rewarded with the helpless "chick" every time, a "babe" (not the infantilization in play here) who pretty much literally falls into his arms, a wilting violet subservient to his every command, it's not hard to see that this cultivates a mind-set which takes only a weak will not to act upon.

Every time I'm in the grocery store waiting at the check out line, I'm bombarded with a host of magazines aimed at women, and what do all of these magazines have on the covers? Curiously enough, semi-naked woman. What text do the covers most often carry? Something about sex, about improving your technique, making yourself sexier, spicing things up, and on and on. I rarely stand at the check-out without seeing at least one mention of sex on the cover of at least one magazine. These are magazines that used to cover the model's head with the magazine title, as if to make it clear that only her body was of interest - you can safely ignore the mind. Only a professional idiot (aka a rapist) would view this as a guide to your average woman's mind-set and inclinations, but if you're one of the idiots, this tells you quite unequivocally that women want sex, they're desperate for it, they crave it, they need someone to deliver it to their open door. That's all the "consent" a rapist needs.

These magazines, to me, are more abusive to women than actual pornography is, because they are much more pernicious and sly, and they're everywhere. TV and movies send the same message - a message that a woman is only waiting for the right man and she'll hop right into bed and the hell with worrying about STDs. Books are just as bad, especially the ones showing a woman in a state of undress with a manly man on the cover, and even more-so, ill-conceived and misguided young adult novels. The worst of those are ones which purport to deliver a strong female character the main protagonist, yet almost inevitably have this character wilt and take second place when a man shows up, as though she's really quite weak, if not outright incompetent, by herself and in truth needs a man to whip her into shape. All of this contributes to a

comprehensive and overwhelming, if seriously deluded, view of women. I find it a bit sad that this author who does so well in other areas, barely mentions these areas, if at all.

Overall though, despite some issues (one of which is the author's unilateral declaration that couples in happy long-term relationships are pretty much rapists if they wake their partner up by means of foreplay!) this book is well-written, well-researched, and full of useful, needfully disturbing, information and I unreservedly I recommend it.

Julie Ehlers says

I've been a big fan of Kate Harding's writing for several years now, mostly as it appeared on her now-mostly-defunct blog, Shapely Prose, but her first full-length book was a disappointment to me. That, coupled with the fact that I read this on the heels of a couple of books on similar topics, made me a bit wary to pick this one up. Now that I have, though, I'm very glad I did.

Asking for It provides a lot of the same depressing statistics as other books on the subject of rape; where it differs is its tone. Simply put, Harding's humor, irreverence, sarcasm, and way with words make this almost fun to read, while at the same time effectively addressing the various issues a rape culture gives rise to: ridiculous politicians, so-called men's rights activists, clueless treatment in the news, clueless treatment by police officers, clueless treatment in pop culture, etc. The book also dives right in and discusses the "problem" of consent in a much more thorough and persuasive way than I've seen anywhere else. Some of the arguments she makes here have stuck with me months later, and I suspect always will.

Another way this book differs from others is that each chapter offers suggestions for how to combat the problems outlined therein. This has the effect of offering some hope, which is sorely needed when discussing topics like rape. I know some people object to Harding's irreverence and salty language, but if you're not put off by either of those things, I would probably recommend this book about rape above all the others currently available.

Melissa says

"Woman-hating jokes are not jokes. These guys are telling you how they feel."

Well-researched, thoughtful, readable, true.
