

The Silent Crime: Gay Rape

By Dr. Janet Parker

It is the silent crime, because the victims are afraid to come forward to even friends and family. It is an even more silent crime than child abuse – Lesbian or Gay rape.

So consider this scenario, a heterosexual woman is asked by a friend in her church to come to her house for dinner. The first woman may know that her casual acquaintance is a lesbian, but does not consider this to be a threatening situation. She believes it to be just an every day casual social event. The evening begins very normally with simple conversation and nothing in this lesbian's behavior gives a clue of the crime to follow. Unbeknownst to the straight woman, the lesbian has acquired a dose of the drug GBL, in order to facilitate her sexual advances on her victim. The lesbian has used this drug many times before, as it is a common drug used recreationally by the gay and lesbian community. The lesbian justifies the use of a date rape drug by telling herself, that the straight woman is really a lesbian, but in denial of her "true sexual orientation." The GBL is only to "relax" her and get her to admit that she really likes the sexual advances. When the straight woman starts vomiting and feeling strange, the lesbian is so caring and compassionate. The lesbian knows that soon her victim will be ripe for the sexual molestation. As the drug takes effect, the victim becomes disoriented; memory of the event will be lost. When she awakes from the drug-induced coma, she will not know what has actually transpired. The lesbian will have taken some photographs of the events of the evening "For insurance." The photos can be used to blackmail the victim, if she should be so foolish, as to go to the police or report the rape. If the victim persists in giving a report, the claim that she is homophobic, and just fabricating the rape will most likely keep the police from investigating the crime. Police are often uncomfortable dealing with any sexual crime within the gay or lesbian community. After all a woman can't rape another woman, can she?

Because many people define rape as penetration by a penis, woman on woman rape is not generally acknowledged. It is often not taken seriously and regarded as being not as "not as bad" as male-female rape. Lesbians and bisexual women are often targeted for sexual violence. It is estimated that 1 out of 3 lesbians have been sexually assaulted by another woman. Woman on Woman sexual assaults are rarely reported.

Remember rape is about power and control and not about roles. The rape does not define gender or orientation roles. There is a myth that butches are never raped and femmes never rape. The fact is that regardless of one's sexual orientation (gay or straight) she/he can be raped. Being the victim of a male on male rape does not mean that the perpetrator or the victim are gay. Those under the influence of drugs can often display sexual behavior not consistent with their normal orientation. The rapist may be a heterosexual man raping a heterosexual man. In woman on woman rape it must be remembered that some butches rape, but so do some femmes.

Women who survive same-sex rape go through a similar recovery process as people who survive opposite-sex rape. They feel confused, angry, scared, and also face many barriers to getting the help they need. Gay men and lesbians may feel hesitant to discuss same sex rape for fear of being accused of betraying their community, thereby being isolated from support.

Professor Lori B. Gishick, a professor of sociology and women's studies at Warren Wilson College in North Carolina, has worked for about 10 years in battered women's organizations and has run a support group specifically for abused lesbians. The "myth that women are not violent," is persistent and contributes to a denial of woman-to-woman sexual violence, not only among the general population but also among lesbians. The estimated incidence of domestic abuse in gay and lesbian relationships is one out of three, about the same number arrived at for abuse in heterosexual relationships.

The use of the drug GHB/GBL in gay men in the USA is increasing. It is becoming a very popular party drug. On November 4, 2004 a United States man, well known in the gay community, was accused of drugging and sexually assaulting several men. According to Tampa, Florida police, 45-year-old Steven Lorenzo boasted on the Internet, about drugging six men with GHB prior to sexually assaulting them. According to the indictment Lorenzo was charged with six counts of "knowingly and intentionally distributing for human consumption a substance containing a detectable amount of gammahydroxybutyric acid, also known as GHB, and gamma-butyrolactone, also known as GBL."

Over the past year the recreational drug problem in Great Britain in relation to GHB/GBL has increased dramatically. It is alarming fact that about half of those who take GHB suffer an overdose. Overdosing is relatively easy and can result in seizures or unconsciousness. Mixing GHB/GBL with alcohol or other depressants can be extremely dangerous and has caused deaths due to respiratory failure.

It was only a few years ago that the drug, GHB, found its way into Australia. Originally used by bodybuilders to increase muscle bulk, it soon gained a reputation in Sydney's gay community as the euphoric drug of choice. When GHB, first emerged on the club scene a dose cost about \$50. Now its cost can be as low as \$1 per ml and a dose is about two or three ml. Now drug experts are warning that the use of GHB has spread across Australia and that it poses an increasing threat as a date rape drug. GHB is being seen increasingly in the straight community.

The increasing use of drugs such as Meth, GHB, GBL, and Ecstasy in raves, circuit parties and social events increases the likelihood of gay on gay rape and also gay on straight rape or even hate based rape of gay men or lesbians. Until recently the problem has been completely discounted and thus received little attention. The incidence of domestic violence in gay and lesbian couples is probably at least as high as in heterosexual couples, if not higher. Another study of 113 lesbians reported that 41% said they had been abused in one or more relationships.

One USA study estimates that between 15-20% of gay and lesbian couples are affected by domestic violence. The study describes gay male domestic violence as "the third most severe health problem facing gay men today", trailing behind AIDS and substance abuse. The researchers estimated that approximately 500,000 gay men in the USA each year are battered by a violent partner.

A USA survey of lesbian and gay couples (8,000 men and 8,000 women) found that approximately 11% of female couples reported rape, physical assault or stalking, compared to 15% of male couples. Not surprisingly the survey indicated that most incidents are not reported to the police. Female respondents indicated that they reported only 20% of all rapes, 25% of physical assaults and 50% of all stalking incidents. The report rate was even lower among male victims.

Male on Male rape constitutes about 5 to 10% of all rapes. Most offenders are in their early to mid-20s. When documented at all, "gay" men were raped at rates higher than heterosexual men. Weapons are frequently used in male rape and at a much higher rate than that of women. Multiple assailants are more common in the rape of men than of women. Contemplation of suicide is fairly common among male rape survivors, especially among those men who feel they cannot reach out for the support they so desperately need. The number of gay men who have suffered a drug-facilitated sexual assault is unknown because it is almost never reported.

For further information visit the web site <http://www.projectghb.org/>

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