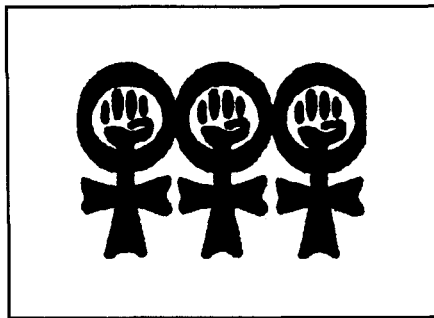


Terror, Torture and Resistance

Andrea Dworkin

Andrea Dworkin delivered this keynote speech at the May 1991 Canadian Mental Health Association's "Women and Mental Health Conference — Women in a Violent Society," held in Banff, Alberta.



We're here because of an emergency. You all know that. We're here wanting to speak about the progress we've made, but knowing that women are not any safer from rape now than when we started out. I'm glad that the Canadian Mental Health Association is concerned with our health. Because I for one am sick to death. I am sick from the numbers of women who are being brutalized and raped and sodomized. Who are being killed, who are missing. Who in a women's culture of non-violence don't hurt the people who are hurting us. We do take our own lives. We do commit suicide. So many women I have known have spent every day of their lives fighting to stay alive, because of the despair they carry around with them from the sexual abuse that they have experienced in their lives. And these are brave women. And these are strong women. And these are creative women. These are women who thought that they had a right to dignity, to individuality, to freedom, to creativity, and in fact, they couldn't even walk down a city block in freedom. Many of them were raped as children in their own homes, by relatives. By their fathers, by their uncles, by their brothers, before they were, quote, women. Many of them were beaten by the men who loved them. Their husbands, by lovers. Many of them were tortured by those men and when you look at what happened to these women, you say Amnesty International where are you? Where are you? Because the prisons for women are our homes. We live under martial law. We live in places in which a rape culture exists. That is a women's home, where she lives. Men have to be sent to prison, to live in a culture that is as rapist as the normal home in North America. We live under what amounts to a military curfew. Enforced by rapists. And we say usually that we're free citizens in a free society. We lie. We lie, we lie everyday about it.

We survive through amnesia. By not remembering what happened to us. By

being unable to remember the name of the woman who was in the newspaper yesterday. Who was walking somewhere and was missing. What was her name? I am sick to death of not being able to remember the names. There are too many of them. I can't remember them. There's one name especially I can never remember. The woman who was raped, gang raped on the pool table in New Bedford, Massachusetts. By four men while everyone in the bar stood and watched and cheered and so on. That woman died in an accident. The kind of accident the police will always call suicide, within one year after the trial for rape. It wasn't news to anyone. Three months before this woman was raped on that pool table, *Hustler* ran a spread of a woman being gang raped on a pool table. Everything that was done to that woman in the pornography was done to that woman, in that bar, that night. After the New Bedford gang rape, *Hustler* ran a photograph of a woman in a pornographic pose, made like a greeting card, sitting on a pool table, saying Welcome to New Bedford. The rape trial was televised in the United States. The ratings beat out the soap operas. In the United States, people watched it as entertainment everyday. The woman was driven out of town. Even though the rapists were convicted. And within one year she was dead and I can't remember her name, no matter how hard I try. Hollywood made a movie, called "The Accused." A brilliant movie, an incredible movie, in which Jodie Foster, through her artistry and creativity, shows us that a woman is a human being. And it takes two hours to establish for a mainstream audience that in fact, that's true, so that at the point, when we reach the gang rape, we understand that someone, someone, someone has been hurt in a way that goes beyond the sum of the physical brutalities that were done to her. The Hollywood version had a happy ending. The voyeurs were convicted of having incited the rape. And the woman triumphed. And

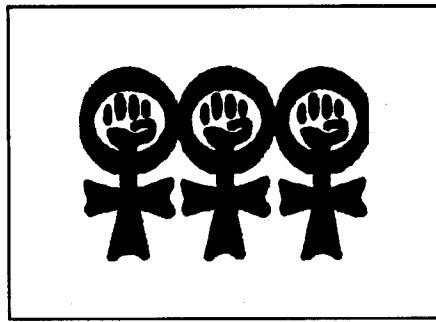
I sat in the theatre thinking, "But she's dead. What's her name? Why can't I remember her name?"

And the women whose name I do remember, for instance, a woman in New York who was murdered in Central Park by a man who had been her lover. Her name is Jennifer Levin. And the reason that I know her name is that when she was killed, murdered by this lover of hers, the New York press put her name on the front page of every newspaper in tabloid headlines to say what a slut she was. Now I didn't buy any of those papers. It's just that I couldn't leave my house and not read the headlines. And so, the boy goes to trial. A white boy. An upper class boy. A wealthy boy. It becomes called the preppie murder case. And we hear in the United States, for the first time, about something called the rough sex defence, and it goes as follows, "She wanted to have really rough, painful, humiliating sex." "She was an aggressive bitch and she tried to tie him up. And she hurt him, and he got so upset, that in trying to free himself, he accidentally strangled her, with her bra." Alright. Now in this scenario, women in New York, were terrorized by the media exploitation where, the way women are treated when women are raped, is suddenly the way women are treated when women are murdered. She provoked it. She wanted it. She liked it and she got what she deserved. When the head of our sex crimes unit, Linda Fairstein, tried to get a conviction of this man for murder, she had a problem. And her problem was that she couldn't find a motive. She didn't think that she could convince the jury that there was any reason for him to kill Jennifer Levin. And, of course, there wasn't any reason for him to. Except that he wanted to. And he could. He plea bargained, and so the jury decision never came in. Most of us thought he was going to be acquitted. After he plea bargained, videos were shown on television, of Mr. Chambers at sex parties, making fun of strangling the woman. Sitting naked, surrounded by women, and reenacting the murder. And laughing about it. We live in a world where men kill women and the motives are not personal at all. As any woman in this room who has ever been beaten or raped knows. It is one of the most impersonal experiences you will ever have. You are a married woman. You live with a man. You think that he knows you and you know him. But in fact, when he be-

gins to hurt you, he does it because you're a woman. Not because you're who you are, whoever that is.

I want us to stop lying. I think that we tell a lot of lies to get through everyday and I want us to stop lying. And one of the lies that we tell is that this kind of woman hating is not as pernicious, as lethal, as sadistic, as vicious as other kinds of hatred that are directed against people because of a condition of birth. We have recognized some, only some, of the historical atrocities that have occurred. We say to ourselves, this isn't the same. I'm Andrea. I'm Jane. I'm...I'm...I'm...I'm me. I'm me. But everyone has said that. Every Jew pushed onto a train said, "But... I'm me. Don't you...why are you doing this? I'm me." And the Nazis didn't have a personal motive, that could be understood in those terms. And what I am saying to you is that we are in a situation of emergency. You know that. You know that. Maybe in the States there is no longer the belief on any woman's part whatever her politics, that she will be exempt. Whatever her class. Whatever her race. Whatever her profession. No one of us believes that we will get out this life not only alive, but unraped, unbeaten, unused, unforced. Let alone having actually experienced what we have a right to, which is freedom. We have a right to freedom. What happens when you're walking down that street. You can't get lost in thought can you? Because you better know who's around you at every moment. We live in a police state where every man is deputized. I want us to stop smiling. I want us to stop saying we're fine. I want us to stop saying that this can be fixed after it happens. It might be able to be used. What we learn from being hurt, we may be able to use but can it be fixed? No. It can't be fixed. So the question is how do we stop it from happening to begin with?

We have had a brilliant movement that has saved many lives. And I, especially, thank you and honor you, those of you who work in rape crisis centres and in battered women shelters. I wished to hell you had been there during some parts of my life. And anyone my age, anyone in their forties, would not have encountered any kind of help. Like the kind of help we provide. But we have to change our focus now. We have to stop it from happening. Because, otherwise, we accept that our condition is one in which the rape of women is normal. Brutality towards



women is normal. And the question is how do we regulate it? How do we reduce it? Maybe they could even go to more hockey games than they go to now. You know, other outlets, diversions. I'm here to say that the war against women is a real war. It's real. There's nothing abstract about it. It's not ideological, although it includes ideology. And people fight on the ground of ideas, yes. But this is a war in which his fist is in your face. And that's real. And that's true. And freedom means that that doesn't happen. You see, we walk around saying it didn't happen today or it hasn't happened yet. Or I've been lucky for the last three months. Or, oh I found a good one now. Nice one, he won't hurt me too much. He may insult me a lot, but he won't hurt me. And maybe it's true and maybe it isn't. But we have to find out how to stop men from hurting women, at all. Under any circumstances.

You know that most women are hurt in their homes. You know most women are murdered in their homes. A political movement, as I understand it, exists to change the way social reality is organized. And that means that we need to understand everything about the way this system works. And that means that every woman who has had experience with sexual violence of any kind has not just pain, and not just hurt, but has knowledge. Knowledge of male supremacy. Knowledge of what it is. Knowledge of what it feels like. And can begin to think strategically about how to stop it. We are living under a reign of terror. Now what I want to say is that I want us to stop accepting that that's normal. And the only way that we can stop accepting that that's normal is if we refuse to have amnesia everyday of our lives. If we remember what we know about the world we live in. And we get up in the morning, determined that we are going to do something about it.

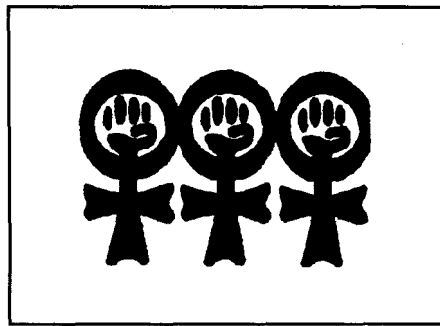
We need to understand how male violence works. That's one of the reasons that studying pornography and fighting

the pornography industry is so important. Because that's the pentagon. That's the war room. They train the soldiers. Then the soldiers go out and do the actions on us. We're the population that the war is against. And this has been a terrible war. Because our resistance has not been serious. It has not been enough. The minute we think we might have a right to do something about that pornography shop, we stop thinking. And I mean legal or illegal. We don't believe we have legal right to do much about it. Let alone any illegal right. Inside us, this worthlessness that we carry around, which is the main consequence of the fear that we live with, makes us subscribe in terms of our behaviour, to the system that says, the man who wants to hurt us, his life is worth more than ours. We accept it. And a lot of our ability to survive is based on forgetting it as much as we can. I understand that I am talking to women who spend more time than most women with the reality of sexual abuse. If the premise that the freedom of women matters and that the equality of women matters, then education, quote unquote, education, education, education, education is not enough. You know they're educated. Do you know that?

Do you know that the rapist still knows more about rape than we do? Really. That he's keeping secrets from us. We're not keeping secrets from him. Do you know that the pimps know how to manipulate and sell women? They're not stupid men. I am going to challenge the notion that rape and prostitution and other vicious violations of women's rights are abnormal. And that the regular male use of women, the sanctioned male use of women in intercourse is normal and unrelated to the excesses that we seem to be just falling over all of the time. We women who want to be hurt so much. It's actually us that's provoking it all. When a woman has been raped and goes into court, why is it that the judges' premises are the same as pornographers'? Why is that? Intercourse has been a material way of owning woman. This is real, this is concrete. We know it, most of us have experienced it. Now, I'm talking about history and I'm talking about sexuality. Not as an idea in your head, but as, what happens to a woman when she is in bed with a man. And the reason that I'm doing it is because, if we're not willing to look at intercourse as a political institution, that is directly related to the ways in which we are socialized to accept our

inferior status, and one of the ways in which we are controlled, we are not even going to get to the roots of the ways in which male dominance works, in our lives. The fact of the matter is that the basic premise about women is that we are born to be fucked. That is it. Now that means a lot of things. For a lot of years it meant that marriage was outright ownership of a woman's body and intercourse was a right of marriage. That meant that intercourse was, *per se*, an act of force. Because the power of the state mandated that the woman accept intercourse. She belonged to the man. The cultural remnants of this is that in our society, men experience intercourse as possession of women. The culture talks about intercourse as conquering women. Women surrendering. Women being taken. We are looking at a paradigm for rape. Not at a paradigm for reciprocity, for equality, for mutuality or for freedom. When the premise that women exist on earth, in order to be sexually available to men for intercourse, it means that our very bodies are seen as having boundaries that have less integrity than male bodies. Men have orifices. Men can be penetrated. The point of homophobia is to direct men towards women. To punish men for not using women. And that's an acknowledgement of how aggressive and how dangerous men know male sexuality can be for women. When a woman goes into court and she says I've been raped, the judge, the defence lawyer, the press, and many, many, many other people say: no, you had intercourse. And she says no I was raped. And they say a little bit of force is fine. You know that, you know it's still true. It hasn't changed. When you look at male domination as a social system, what you see is that it is organized to make certain that women are sexually available for men. That is its basic premise. And we have a choice. And the choice is not in the political science books. The universities are not trying to work out this level of choice for us. The question is what comes first, men's need to get laid or women's dignity. And I am telling you that you cannot separate the so-called abuses of women from the so-called normal uses of women. The history of women in the world as sexual chattel, makes it impossible to do that.

So, then, are there other implications of this? Yes there are. Because, as sex is currently socialized and existing in our



society, men can't have sex with women who are their equals. They're incapable of it. Right? That's what objectification is about. When we're being good, we use the word objectification. We use long words. We really try to get some dignity in using big words. Well, I'm going to use the short words. The words that they mean when they do what they're doing. Which is we're things. And in order to get the response from men, one has to be the right kind of thing. Now think about what that means. That means that the woman polices herself. That means that she makes decisions that make her freedom impossible. Because if she is going to live, if she is going to make a living, she is going to have to be the kind of object to which the man will respond, in a way that is important to him. And what that means is, in a way that is sexual. Sexual harassment on the job is not some kind of accident. And the fact that women are migrants in the work place is not an accident. When you enter into the agreement, the sexual agreement to be a thing, you then narrow your own possibilities for freedom. And you then accept, as a basic premise of your life, that you will be available, that you will not challenge his sexual hegemony. That you will not demand equality in intimacy. Because after all you've already given up your own body, whether it's been to the plastic surgeon or in whatever way. The women, and it was women...it was women, the women, the mothers, who bound their daughters feet, so that their daughters feet were three inches long. The daughters were crippled. Did it because that was the standard of beauty. And if a woman wanted to eat, a man had to find her beautiful. And if that meant she couldn't walk for the rest of her life, it was a trade that had to be made. It was let's make a deal. And we women are still playing let's make a deal. Instead of deciding what we want, what we need. We have a second class standard for our own freedom. We're afraid, not because

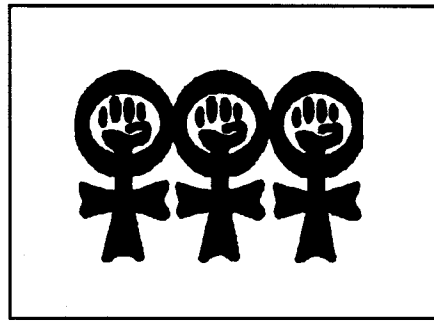
we're cowards, god dammit we are not cowards, we are brave people. But we use our bravery to sustain ourselves when we make these deals. Instead of fighting the system that forces us to make the deal. So that when we make a choice it is a free choice. It is our choice. It is a choice that is really rooted in equality and not in the fact that every woman is still one man away from welfare.

In the United States, violence against women is a major past time. It is a sport. It is an amusement. It is a mainstream cultural entertainment. And it is real. It is pervasive. It is epidemic. It saturates the society. It's very hard to make anyone notice it, because there is so much of it. We have had 30 years, basically, in the United States in particular, I will talk about the United States, of the total saturation of the society with pornography. In this 30 years, we have had many people who have wanted us to study the problem. We have had many people who have wanted us to debate the issues. We have studied, we have debated, we have done it all. There has been the development of a very major population of man in the United States called serial killers. There are a lot of them. And they're men who rape and kill mostly women, sometimes children. They usually mutilate the bodies. Sometimes they have sex before. Sometimes they have sex after. It's all sex to them. Now we can say it's a power trip, but the fact of the matter is that for them, that's the way they have sex. By mutilating and hurting and killing us. We have, in the United States, an incredible, continuing epidemic of murders of women. We have huge missing pieces of our populations in cities. We have, in Kansas City, the mid-west, since 1977 the police — the police the worst source in the world — say that 60 women have been killed. Three quarters of them have been black. They've been women in prostitution. They have been mutilated, or left in what the police and the media — the euphemisms are extraordinary — call suggestive positions. One of the patterns of serial killers is that they do the things they have seen in pornography to their victims and they leave their victims posed as pornography. That is part of what many of them do. Pornography is involved in the biographies of all of them. Sometimes they use it to stalk their victim, sometimes they use it to plan their crime. Sometimes, they use it to rev themselves up to commit the acts. And

yet, people keep insisting that there must be something in the air. It must be the water, it must... I mean, who knows what it is. We can't figure out what it is. How is it that these guys get these ideas to do these things? Where could it be? Let's go on an egg hunt and try to find it. And the fact of the matter is, it's being sold everywhere. It's in the pornography. It says go get them. It says do this to them. It says it's fun. It says they'll like it too. That's the truth and in terms of understanding male dominance, what it means is that society has to stay organized so that there are enough women to provide the raw material for that pornography.

And the material conditions that provide the raw material, the women, again, someone — not something, someone — are poverty, usually incestuous child abuse and homelessness. It is not a mystery. We didn't have the knowledge before; we have been seeking it. All of us in this room have been seeking knowledge. What happens to women? How does it happen? I am telling you we know a lot now. It is time to begin to act on what we know. We know that pornography causes sexual abuse. We know in the United States that the average age of rapists is going down. I mean, it's boys in their young teen age years now, who are committing a preponderance of first assaults against young girls. I brought specific cases but they don't matter really. I mean they're very strange. They're young boys who stick things in...in...infants and kill them. Because they say they've seen it in pornography, when they're asked why did they do it that way. They're young boys who take guns and try to put them in women's vaginas. Where did they see it? Where did they learn it? Ask them. Ask the ones who have been put in jail, in juvenile places for sex offenders. They will tell you I learned how to do it. Now what makes somebody want to do it, may be different then how they learn to do it. But the fact of the matter is, that if you live in a society that is saturated with this kind of woman hating, you live in a society that has marked you as a target for rape, for battery, for prostitution or for death. These are, in my view, the facts.

Now there are some other facts. I want you to know what is in the pornography, because I want you to know what kind of entertainment this is. And I want you to talk about the violence against women and you're here to talk about healing. I



wished that you could raise the dead. That is what I would like to see. This is a political point. One of the reasons that the Right reaches so many women is that the Right has a transcendent god that says I will heal all your hurt and all your pain and all your wounds. I died for you. I will heal you. Feminists do not have a transcendent god who can heal that way. We have ideas about fairness and justice and equality. And we have to find ways to make them real. We don't have magic. We don't have supernatural powers. And we can't keep sticking women together who have been broken up into little pieces. So what I think is that fighting back is as close to healing as we are going to come. And I think that it is important to understand that we will live with a fair amount of pain for most of our lives. And I think that if your first priority is to live a painless life, you will not be able to help yourself or other women. And I think that what matters is to be a warrior. And I think that having a sense of honor about political struggle is healing. And I think that discipline is necessary. And I think that actions against men who hurt women, must be real. We need to win...to win. We are in a war. We have not been fighting back. We need to win this war. We need a political resistance. We need it above ground. We need it with our lawmakers, with our government officials. We need it with our professional women. We need it above ground. We need it underground too.

Everything that didn't happen to you — I apply this to myself as part of the way that I survive — everything that didn't happen to you is a little slack in your leash. You weren't raped when you were three, or you weren't raped when you were 10. Or you weren't battered, or you weren't in prostitution, whatever it is that you managed to miss is the measure of your freedom. And the measure of your strength. And what you owe to other women. I'm not asking you to be martyrs.

I'm not asking you to give up your lives. I'm asking you to live your lives, honorably and with dignity. I'm asking you to fight. I'm asking you to do things for women that women do all the time in political struggle for men. Right? Women put our bodies on the line in political struggles in which both sexes are involved. But we do not do it for women. I'm not asking you to get caught. I'm asking you to escape. I'm asking you to run for your life. If you need to run through a brick wall, run through it. If you get some bruises on your arms, it's better than having him give the bruises to you because you were standing still. None of us has the right to stand still.

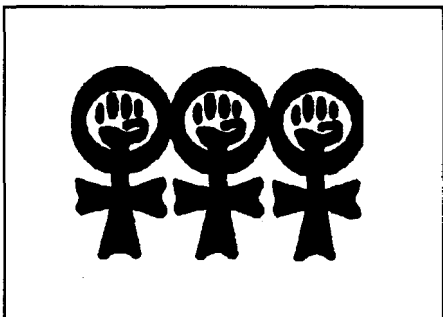
I'm going to ask you to consider doing these things. One is addressing the pornography issue in social policy terms, which I believe means passing some version of the civil rights law that we developed in Minneapolis. There are many reasons for this and I won't go into all of them, but I will tell you this. That obscenity laws say that women's bodies are dirty. That's what they're based on. And that criminal laws do not — do not — do not stop the pornography industry. The business can go on. Somebody else can manage the business: it is a business. But to make men accountable for the ways in which women are exploited in pornography, to recognize it as a form of sex discrimination. To understand that it destroys women's chances in life and to say you are going to pay a penalty. We're going to take your money away from you. We're going to find a way to hurt you back. We are. You're going to pay a price now. No more free ride for you, Mr. Pimp.

I think it's very important that rage and battery and prostitution be recognized legally as violations of the civil rights of women. That we construct a legal system that acknowledges our dignity by acknowledging our wholeness as human beings. And these as human rights violations of the deepest importance and magnitude. I am asking you to retaliate against rapists. To organize against rapists. We know who the rapists are. We know 'cause they do it to us. They did it to our best friend. We know who he is. We know that it happened. I'm asking you to take it seriously. I'm saying if the law won't do anything you must do something.

I'm asking you to close down the pornography outlets wherever you can and to stop the distribution wherever you can, in whatever way you can. I am asking you to

stop passing: stop passing and having feminism be part of a secret life. I am asking you not to apologize to anyone for doing it. I am asking you to organize political support for women who kill men who have been hurting them. They have been isolated and alone. This is a political issue. They're being punished, because at some moment in their lives, they resisted a domination that they were expected to accept. They stand there in jail for us, for everyone one of us who got away without having to pull the trigger, for everyone of us who lived to tell about getting away without having the trigger on us. I'm asking you to stop men who beat women. Get them jailed or get them killed. But stop them. I am not asking you to be martyrs. I am saying that we have been talking for 20 years. And I am saying that men who rape make a choice to rape. And men who beat women make a choice to beat women. And we women now have choices that we have to make to fight back. And I am asking you to look at every single political possibility for fighting back. Instead of saying I asked him, I told him, but he just wouldn't stop. All right? We need to do it together. We need to find ways to do it together. But we need to do it.

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Andrea Dworkin is an internationally known feminist writer and speaker from Minneapolis. She is the author of Women Hating and Letters from a War Zone.

ANDRINE LEDUC

The Spiral

The darkness supplicates and beckons indicating the spiral. Curiosity tugs at the conscious mind while somewhere deeper a warning sounds. What waits there?

There is no escaping these thoughts as the images float by faster and more replete. The spirit, now hungry, reaches out to grasp the mind and pull it deeper into the spiral.

Eyes filled with wonder gaze back at eyes filled with dread. For surely this is the place where darkness lives. Now the separate parts of the self begin to agonize. Perception and reality come face to face while the ego tries to dance in between, swaying to the rhythms of learned behaviour. The battle becomes fierce as the ego calls on all of the self-sacrificing emotions. Scurrying to erect barriers now fallen, perception becomes a momentary ally in the presence of such veracity.

Down, down. Deeper and deeper. The spiral becomes light. Standing in the center is the Self. Not speaking or emoting — just standing. Waiting for this time that has come too swiftly now.

What is the self? It is nothing. It is everything? It is naked. It is clothed. It has no name and can be called anything. It has not power and in so being it has all power. It asks nothing but acceptance.

The challenge now is to accept the self as being nothing and as being everything while being mindful that true acceptance is found within the nothing.

At this the ego weeps and perception falls away for the moment. The eyes now stare back without thought or concern. Empty yet pregnant. All questions answered.

Nothing left now but choices.