

Introduction

ISIS has become some sort of a horrific global buzzword in the past year¹. Mostly due to their military assertions of power; particularly Paris (Charlie Hebdo), Libya, Cairo, Turkey Beirut and Paris again². The United States, Russia, France, Iran, the Kurds, among others are officially in military combat against ISIS as retaliation against their ‘crimes of terror’. However, the world has virtually ignored³ the most horrifying operating principle of the Islamic State; its genocidal actions and systemic rape of the Yezidi people - “In October 2014, ISIS acknowledged in its publication Dabiq that its fighters had given captured Yezidi women and girls to its fighters as “spoils of war...as of late March 2015, the number of dead, abducted, and missing Yezidis had risen to 5,324... The systematic rape of women and girls from the Yazidi religious minority has become deeply enmeshed in the organization \and the radical theology of the Islamic State in the year since the group announced it was reviving slavery as an institution”⁴. Why have global movements for these women been absent? Why have global political leaders sanctioned ISIS for their military acts of terror, and not their approach to systemic rape?

This is the start of a project that aims to re-frame and re-center rape as a colonial tool - a tool used to dominate, dehumanize and subjugate an entire people. As a woman who grew up in a former colony, I was raised in an environment where rape was a normalized

¹ Nearly 2,671 tweets in the last hour according to Topsy. See fig. A.1.

² Yourish, Karen, Derek Watkins, and Tom Giratikanon. "Recent Attacks Demonstrate Islamic State's Ability to Both Inspire and Coordinate Terror." *The New York Times*. June 16, 2015. Accessed December 10, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/17/world/middleeast/map-isis-attacks-around-the-world.html>

³ Only 2 tweets in the last hour according to Topsy. See fig. A.2.

⁴ "Iraq: ISIS Escapees Describe Systematic Rape." *Human Rights Watch*. April 14, 2015. Accessed December 10, 2015. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/04/14/iraq-isis-escapees-describe-systematic-rape>.

undercurrent, largely ignored in public. Everyone knew someone who had committed the act of rape, and even more so the one who were victimized at some point in their life. Simultaneously we were raised to be grateful for the great men that had fought and won our independence from the British colonizers. We were made to swallow a heavy dose of masculine nationalism where rape was just an unfortunate bi-product. Similarly, as I have been made to occupy the space of ‘woman of color’⁵ in the United States, rape remains a ubiquitous and dark undercurrent. Many of us know women, and even more women of color who have been raped. And still, I learn of the great men who led the charge for desegregation and I am to be grateful to them for the opportunities I have now. Rape is just an unfortunate bi-product.

I will pursue the act of re-centering rape as a specific and rampantly pervasive tool of enforcing power within the Jim Crow South in the U.S. and in India under colonial rule. I will make the argument that once rape is recognized as more than a mere bi-product of society, but instead as a central apparatus for subjugation, freedom movements must then focus on anti-rape rhetoric in order to achieve societal ‘wellness’. Historic freedom movements, which we are taught to be grateful for, ignored the centrality of rape and engaged the pursuit of freedom as a competition in masculinity. I will argue that this has enabled rape to persist through to our contemporary existence, rendering the most marginalized women the most vulnerable, and ultimately inhibiting true liberation for the formerly colonized or subjugated group.

I will examine moments under colonial India and the Jim Crow South to invoke a cross continental commonality in tools of violation and subordination. By further examining

⁵ This is a relatively new space for me (2009), as an immigrant who was suddenly made to understand that I was very much a ‘non white’ woman.

the freedom movements in each of these instances a commonality in the ignorance of rape within struggles for liberation will be revealed.

Method, Terms and Sources

Traci West's *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter* will inform my enterprise to examine the universal through the eyes of the particular. "The universal and the particular are joined together through a deliberate, analytical strategy where the particular experience of women helps to give meaning to the universal ethical principle about maintaining the well being of all people. In other words, women experiences bring to the surface important ideas about what is needed to achieve and maintain our common well being. The particular (women experience) is a vehicle to gain insight about the universal (common well being)"⁶. Within the context of this project the particular will often indicate or be in reference to the most marginalized under a system of domination; Black women under Jim Crow South, Indian women, particularly lower caste Indian women under colonial rule and the Yezidi women under ISIS control. The universal well being will mean the liberation of the oppressed group of people, either Black people under Jim Crow or colonized Indians or what might mean liberation for the Yezidi peoples. Did the removal of the issues specific to the particular, in this case rape, from the universal calls to liberation impede the ability to experience true freedom? And did it perpetuate the exposure of sexual violence to the most marginalized, to remain silently endured?

I will call for a feminist approach to re-centering rape as well as the project of re-envisioning liberation. As Traci West invokes her mentor Beverly Harris in exploring embodied sources of moral knowledge, "a feminist approach compels us to resist the

⁶ West, Traci C. *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006, 44.

temptation to use the pursuit of rational categories to avoid the sensual implications that are present in the material relations we seek to understand and alter. This ethical work requires a visceral recognition of the meaning of body invasion, body assault, and body demeaning speech, for women and the whole of society. Knowledge that we acquire through our bodily perceptions must not be dis-counted in ethics, for it is a crucial source of moral knowledge”⁷. Meaning in the absence of political analysis and historical documentation, embodied knowledge and memory must not be discounted from discourses pertaining to liberation.

And finally as a project of Christian Social Ethics I will make the comparison between the particular or the marginalized and the ‘least of these’; under the Judgement of Nations in Matthew 24, “and the King will answer them, truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me”⁸. There is significance in critiquing systems of control mostly implemented under the guise of Christianity⁹, with specific detail and call to action toward the ‘least of these’. The least of these are referenced as ‘family’ of God. Meaning the violation of the marginalized is an inherent violation of God.

I want to intentionally avoid glorifying suffering as a way in to the Kingdom of Heaven or to attain Liberation. This work is not intended to place value on the suffering of the marginalized, but rather to shift our societal focus from viewing them as mere bi-products of the world in which we navigate, to glaring symptoms of our universal systems

⁷ West, Traci C. *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006, 42.

⁸ Matthew 25:40

⁹ Colonization and Jim Crow were largely implemented by those that considered themselves Christian.

of violent oppression. My goal is to show that by fighting for the freedom of the least of these, liberation and well being for the universal can be achieved. Secondly in my incorporation of the contemporary practices of ISIS, I want make clear that this work has no intention of painting the insurgents as barbaric on account of their faith in Islam. Being a Christian Social Ethics project there is a great risk of enforcing Christian supremacy upon those that practice other faiths. My focus is on our societal ignorance toward the systemic practices of rape at the hands of ISIS, and my conviction that rape is a learned form of subjugation, long ignored and disguised as merely an unfortunate societal occurrence and result of conflict.

When examining instances under Jim Crow and colonization, I will follow a parallel method of exposure and analysis. First, to uncover evidence of the pervasiveness of rape and sexual violence. Second, to reveal some evidence, if any, of resistance movements specific to sexual violence. Next, analyze the evident ignorance of sexual violence as more than simply a reality of the most marginalized and to subsequently name the absence of naming sexual violence as a specific control mechanism widely accepted on part of the colonizer. And finally, to investigate the evidence that suggests that those most marginalized under systemic control- remain the most subjugated to sexual violence today.

British India

“At a symbolic level, the penetration and conquest of faraway lands was charged with sexual significance and intrigue. The white male’s domination and possession of dark and fertile lands in Africa, Asia and the Americas offered, in Anne McClintock’s words, ‘a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden

sexual desires and fears”¹⁰. Elizabeth Kolsky analyzes the frequency in which the conquest of India and other colonial lands were frequently described as sexual conquests. Lands where the taboo sexual desires of British gentlemen could be fulfilled, yet hidden from society at home. Yet she problematizes the frequency in which ‘rape imagery’ is used. She hypothesizes that its frequency camouflages the reality of the Indian woman under colonial rule. British literature at the time so frequently refers to sexual exploits with ‘rape imagery’ it is almost impossible to denote when actual rape occurs - “The politics of rape were also symbolically significant to the politics of empire. “To the colonizer...rape was an ‘allegory of empire’ that expressed imperial fears and fantasies, particularly during moments of political crisis”.

India entertained colonial powers from the early 1600’s until its independence in 1947. Many factors play in to the absence of documented histories of rape at the hands of colonizers. Caste is a historically underestimated and under explored narrative in the Western academy. Lower caste women were frequently subjugated to the sexual exploitations of both higher caste Indian men, as well as their colonizers. But almost no written evidence exists. “A statistical examination of high court rape case law in India suffers from the same limitations faced by criminal law historians in other global contexts. First, the historical record cannot be taken as an accurate mirror of the historical reality. Unrecorded crime, as James Sharpe puts it, is the ‘dark figure’ impeding our understanding and analysis of rates and patterns of crime and conviction over time. When it comes to rape, this ‘dark figure’ may very well represent the majority of incidents due to the plethora of

¹⁰ Kolsky, Elizabeth. “‘The Body Evidencing the Crime’: Rape on Trial in Colonial India, 1860–1947.” *Gender & History* 22 (1) (2010).

factors that prevented a victim from lodging a charge and prosecuting a case”¹¹. In *Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence and Empire*, Sikata Banerjee explores the formation of nationalistic identity in the context of masculinity. Rape and women sexuality is appropriated within the context of masculine nationalism, “centering a version of the heroic, citizen-warrior model linked to armed masculinity represented by disciplined, martial male bodies”¹², meaning the appropriate places for women’s sexuality and femininity were limited to the ‘mother’ figure, child bearing and guard of culture, or the unsexual chaste woman who is left to navigate the masculine by maintaining role of protector¹³. Investigating the roles of Hindu goddesses Kali and Durga, one can find powerful feminine figures, ‘blood thirsty goddesses’ lamenting the conquest of the motherland, and yet, “the cultural icons of warrior goddesses, indicate that, in the relationship between nation as woman and women in nation, the female body can take on traits of hegemonic masculinity in muscular nationalism, but these female bodies are at all times situated in a dynamic juxtaposition with competing imaginings of frail mother and chaste wife. Muscular nationalism is troubled by polarized femininity in its myriad forms and attempts to contain it through an emphasis on chastity¹⁴”. Chastity- is crucial as condition of an Indians woman honor and protection. “Rape is seen as a tool of war”¹⁵,

¹¹Kolsky, Elizabeth. “‘The Body Evidencing the Crime’: Rape on Trial in Colonial India, 1860–1947.” *Gender & History* 22 (1) (2010). 115.

¹²Banerjee, Sikata. "Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence and Empire in India and Ireland 1914-2004." 2012.4

¹³Banerjee, Sikata. "Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence and Empire in India and Ireland 1914-2004." 2012.,4

¹⁴ Banerjee, Sikata. "Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence and Empire in India and Ireland 1914-2004." 2012. 69.

¹⁵Banerjee, Sikata. "Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence and Empire in India and Ireland 1914-2004." 2012. 3.

according to a masculine nationalistic ideal explored by Banerjee, and yet in the context of the Indian woman, almost always her fault, a stain on family and nationalistic honor: “a young female body would interrupt the robing Bengali fraternity with its sexuality. Specifically, in terms of muscular nationalism, her body could undermine the manhood of her male companions by defiling her nations honor if she were raped”¹⁶.

These constructions of masculine nationality, both under colonization and post independence, combined with notions of chastity and honor, have effectively limited the written evidence of rape cases in colonial India. One such colonial account of documentation rape under empire comes at the hands of Edmund Burke, in "A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly," written in 1772, Edmund Burke describes the ‘colonial relationship between England and India as poised between courtship and rape’¹⁷. Edmund Burke’s perseverance at revealing the ‘rapaciousness’ of British colonial policy in India was a minority voice at the time, and such efforts were diminished in part due to his early death in 1797¹⁸.

While I was unsuccessful in attaining evidence of women resisting rape under colonial rule, my embodied sense of inter-generational memory and understanding of identity convinces me that resistance was prevalent, but silenced and seemingly lost to history. As Kalpana Kannabiran explains, “we must explore the manner in which the

¹⁶Banerjee, Sikata. "Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence and Empire in India and Ireland 1914-2004." 2012. 105.

¹⁷Sinha, Mrinalini, and Nancy L. Paxton. "Writing under the Raj: Gender, Race, and Rape in the British Colonial Imagination, 1830-1947." *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*.1.

¹⁸Sinha, Mrinalini, and Nancy L. Paxton. "Writing under the Raj: Gender, Race, and Rape in the British Colonial Imagination, 1830-1947." *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*.3.

identity of a community is constructed on the bodies of women”, both in terms of conquest and resilience¹⁹.

Evidence of normalized routine rape culture under colonial rule is prevalent in cultural texts and folk lore in India. And yet, its fighters of independence were exclusively men, who often displayed their ‘respect’ for women by merely being accompanied by them.

Mahatma Gandhi records his views on rape in *Non violence in peace and war, Vol 1*; “I have always held that it is physically impossible to violate a woman against her will. The outrage takes place only when she gives way to fear or does not realize her moral strength. If she cannot meet the assailant's physical might, her purity will give her the strength to die before he succeeds in violating her. Take the case of Sita. Physically she was a weakling before Ravana, but her purity was more than a match even for his giant might. He tried to win her with all kinds of allurements but could not carnally touch her without her consent. On the other hand, if a woman depends on her own physical strength or upon a weapon she possesses, she is sure to be discomfited whenever her strength is exhausted”²⁰. It is imperative that the connection be made between Gandhi’s violent dismissal of rape as a possibility at all, and the rampant nature of rape within the context of Indian culture today. And yet inspire all codes of honor and silencing, women stand up against sexual assault in contemporary India, at grave risk of their safety. 93 women are raped daily in India, 33,707 reported cases in 2013²¹. The historic case of the woman who was gang raped on a bus in

¹⁹Jayawardena, Kumari, and Malathi De Alwis. "Embodied Violence: Communalising Women's Sexuality in South Asia." *Reproductive Health Matters*. 32.

²⁰Desai, Mahadev H. *Non-violence in Peace & War*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Pub. House, 1942.

²¹ "93 Women Are Being Raped in India Every Day, NCRB Data Show - Times of India." *The Times of India*. Accessed December 10, 2015. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/93-women-are-being-raped-in-India-every-day-NCRB-data-show/articleshow/37566815.cms>.

New Delhi, galvanized an opportunity for women to organize against systemic rape²². Despite the exposure of egregiously violent cries against women in India the government under Prime Minister Modi, maintains that marital rape cannot be considered a crime in India, “if marital rape is brought under the law, the entire family system will be under great stress²³”.

The legacy of the Indian government ignoring and disqualifying the rampant violation of women’s bodies is centuries old, from the dismissal of the British colonizer to Gandhi himself.

Rape in Jim Crow South

“The rape of black women by white men continued, often unpunished, throughout the Jim Crow era. As Reconstruction collapsed and jim Crow arose, white men abducted and assaulted black women with alarming regularity”²⁴. Danielle McGuire persists on an extraordinary project of collecting stories and evidence of the prevalence of rape culture in Jim Crow south.

She begins her account with Recy Taylor, a woman from Abbeville, Alabama who was kidnapped in front Fannie Daniel and her son, and gang raped by six men at gun point. The NAACP investigator that was sent to assist Ms. Taylor was the historically

²² McVeugh, Tracy. "More Buses, Street Lights: How to Make India Safer for Women." The Guardian. September 14, 2013. Accessed December 10, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/15/rape-india-campaign-safety-women>.

²³ "Modi Government's Reasons Why Marital Rape Is Not a Crime." India Real Time RSS. Accessed December 10, 2015. <http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2015/04/30/modi-governments-reasons-why-marital-rape-is-not-a-crime/>

²⁴ McGuire, Danielle L. *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance- a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. 142

misconstrued, Rosa Parks²⁵. “Former slaveholders and their sympathizers used rape as a ‘weapon of terror’ to dominate the bodies and minds of African American men and women. Interracial rape was not only used to uphold white patriarchal power but was also deployed as a justification for lynching black men who challenged the Southern status quo”²⁶, McGuire continues to excavate rape culture in the Jim Crow South as more than simply present, but an intentional “sexually charged campaign of terror to derail the freedom movement.”²⁷

Melba Patillo was a 12 year old African American student in Little Rock, Arkansas, when her school teacher let her out of class early the day the the Brown vs. Board of Education decision was released. So frequent was the threat of rape as retaliation, the teacher urged her students ‘pay attention to where you’re walking. Walk in groups, don’t walk alone’²⁸. On her way back home Patillo was lured and chased by a ‘burly white man’ who screamed, “I’ll show you n***** the Supreme Court can’t ruin my life”²⁹. Melba Patillo escaped her attacker that afternoon, but remained in silent trauma until it was safe for her to publicly recall her story decades later.

In the wake of the Brown v. Board and the Voting Rights Act, male politicians and often times male civil rights leaders ‘underscored the importance of sex and sexualized violence to the maintenance of white supremacy’³⁰.” Simultaneous to the constant threat of rape, was the public sexual demonizing the civil rights movement, “drunkenness and sex

²⁵(McGuire, 2010, p.)

²⁶ (McGuire, 2010, p. ix)

²⁷ (McGuire, 2010, p. xxi)

²⁸ (McGuire, 2010, p. 135)

²⁹ (McGuire, 2010, p. 136)

³⁰ (McGuire, 2010, p. 213)

orgies were the order of the day' William Dickinson, the freshman congressman of Alabama fumed in 1965³¹.

Rosa Parks was a preeminent anti rape activist long before she became the patron saint of the bus boycott. After her encounter and investigation with Recy Taylor, she helped form the Committee for Equal Justice where she organized the Chicago defender, which would eventually evolve into the Montgomery Improvement Association or the Montgomery bus boycott. While this moment is commonly known as the jump start to the civil rights movement, 'in many ways it was the last act of a decades long struggle to protect black women like Recy Taylor from sexualized violence and rape.'³²

The classical Civil Rights movement is not portrayed however, as a movement initiated by women resisting white supremacist sexual violence. "Analyses of rape and sexualized violence play little or no role in most histories of the civil rights movement which present it as a struggle between black and white men....the historically accurate story that the civil rights movement is also rooted in African American women's long struggle against sexual violence has never before been written", McGuire writes in her prologue³³. In Martin Luther King's historic speech on the March on Washington he sermonizes the demands of the classic civil rights movement;

"There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. *We

³¹(McGuire, 2010, p. 219)

³² (McGuire, 2010, p. xvii)

(McGuire, 2010, p. xvii)

cannot be satisfied as long as the negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their self-hood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating: "For Whites Only."* We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until "justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream"³⁴. Voting, education and police brutality are centered in his ambitions, but sexual violence is completely absent from this historic moment.

While access to statistics and evidence of systemized rape under Jim Crow is difficult to access due to centuries of lynching and white supremacist legal systems combined with misinformed journalism, the legacy of sexual violence against Black women is attainable due to communal memory, autobiographies, the Black press and now thanks to works similar to that of Danielle McGuire. And yet even with the multiplicity of evidence that sexual violence was indeed central to Jim Crow subjugation as well as to the history of the civil rights movement, just as the leaders of the movement itself, it is underplayed invisibilized and undermined in value in the teaching of it's history. In David Garrow's *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, he begins his account of this historic resistance with Rosa Parks, "Thursday had been busy and tiring for Mrs. Raymond A. Parks. Her job as a tailors assistant at the Montgomery Fair department store had left her neck and shoulder particularly sore...."³⁵,

³⁴"Martin Luther King I Have a Dream Speech - American Rhetoric." Martin Luther King I Have a Dream Speech - American Rhetoric. Accessed December 10, 2015. <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkhaveadream.htm>.

³⁵Garrow, David J. *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*. New York: W. Morrow, 1986. 1.

the narrative of the tired, old seamstress instead of the monumentally committed anti rape activist for the NCAA. The narrative maintains that a fatigued woman somehow 'accidentally' sparked the civil rights movement, and the men around her took the charge to fight in a battle for masculinity. Rampant sexual assault was written as an unfortunate bi-product.

Today, 60 percent of Black girls will experience sexual abuse before the age of 18³⁶. Sexual assault is at 40 percent among Black women. 2014's BlackLivesMatter movement echoed the energy and spirit of the Civil Rights movement, and yet all too familiarly black women had to remind the movement repeatedly that it was jump started by women, and that sexual assault was central to the demands for liberation³⁷.

So what?

In the fall of 2014 I took a class on Gandhi and King at Union Theological Seminary. The learning goals of the class were centered in understanding cross continental colonial manifestations and development of freedom movements. Yet there were no women on the syllabus. When students protested, a week devoted to women was added, all authors on the particular women issues were men. Sexual assault was completely absent from class discussion and analysis.

³⁶ "Black Women, Sexual Assault and the Art of Resistance." Forbes. Accessed December 10, 2015. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/shenegotiates/2012/04/25/black-women-sexual-assault-and-the-art-of-resistance/>.

³⁷ "Women and Black Lives Matter: An Interview with Marcia Chatelain | Dissent Magazine." Dissent Magazine. Accessed December 10, 2015. <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/women-black-lives-matter-interview-marcia-chatelain>.

What does it mean that we continue to engage in the violent erasure of the struggles of women who survive under systems of subjugation? What does it mean that we ignore Gandhi's revolting dismissal of rape as a concept, of King's co-opting of a decade long movement for women liberation as that for simply de-segregation? What does it mean that our basic understandings of historical fights for freedom have completely silenced the marginal?

My experience in that class galvanized my validation in my embodied understanding of the violence of erasure. My embodied understanding of my vulnerability to sexual violence at home and in the United States has made it clear that the dismissal of its magnitude is violent in and of itself. Black women and Indian women are populations that are incredibly susceptible to rape to this day. Liberation movements have come and gone, and those who were once the most silenced and brutalized, remain invisible.

In the current global societal moment where Western nations continue to advance military attacks in the ever despairingly destabilized Middle East in pursuit of defeating 'ISIS', the stories of the Yezidi women remain absent from our cries against ISIS. What might it mean to base our advance and critic of ISIS from the point of view of seeking liberation and healing for those that they have violated the most? What might it mean to incorporate the particular narratives of 'the least of these' in our pursuit for freedom?

"From 9:30 in the morning, men would come to buy girls to rape them. I saw in front of my eyes ISIS soldiers pulling hair, beating girls, and slamming the heads of anyone who resisted. They were like animals.... Once they took the girls out, they would rape them and bring them back to exchange for new girls. The girls' ages ranged from 8 to 30 years... only 20 girls remained in the end...Two sisters, Rana, 25, and Sara, 21, said they could do

nothing to stop the abuse of their 16-year-old sister by four men over several months. The sister was allowed to visit them and told them that the first man who raped her, whom she described as a European, also beat her, handcuffed her, gave her electric shocks, and denied her food. She told them another fighter later raped her for a month and then gave her to an Algerian for another month. The last time they saw her was when a Saudi ISIS fighter took her. "We don't know anything about her since," Sara said. The two sisters said they were also raped multiple times by two men, one of whom said he was from Russia and the other from Kazakhstan...Jalila said that during her captivity, seven ISIS fighters "owned" her, and four raped her on multiple occasions: "Sometimes I was sold. Sometimes I was given as a gift. The last man was the most abusive; he used to tie my hands and legs."³⁸

Our historic ignorance and abandonment of the most marginalized under systems of oppression, has enabled, perpetuated and amplified their subjugation. Black women, impoverished Indian women and impoverished women across the globe remain invisibly vulnerable to the terror of sexual violence. It is our moral imperative to re-center rape in our histories of domination and freedom. The particular narratives of Jalila, Rana and the other girls matter in the context of ISIS. ISIS is not simply a militarized terrorist organization, they are continuing the tradition of wide spread sexual terrorism that has borne down from colonizers and other subjugators. For us to truly move closer to a universal sense of freedom, we must strive to give voice and centrality to the particular at the margins.

³⁸ "Iraq: ISIS Escapees Describe Systematic Rape." Human Rights Watch. April 14, 2015. Accessed December 10, 2015. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/04/14/iraq-isis-escapees-describe-systematic-rape>.