

Inaccurate understanding of rape

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I refer to Sylvia Hsu-Chen Yip's letter, "Sexy dressing can be provocative," Thursday November 16th, 2006. Her statements and views expressed are misguided at best, largely rely on playing up unhealthy stereotypes of both women and men, and show a common but inaccurate understanding of why rape happens.

I would request that the next time Ms. Yip feels compelled to express her opinion in public, that she not presume to speak on behalf of all women. Not all women crave compliments or are obsessed with their physical appearance. Not all women "revise their wardrobe" on a regular basis, subscribe to the "hottest hairstyles", "rely on cosmetic products to enhance the beauty of her features", or "love to dress up to flaunt [their] femininity. Instead, it is sad that many women feel the need to do these things, in order to conform to society's expectations of what a "woman" should look like.

Ms. Yip's suggestion that women "dress sensibly in order not to send the wrong signals" does not even come remotely close to being a solution to the problem of violence against women. First of all, rape (and other related crimes) does not happen because someone was "tempted". Rape is a crime of power—someone attempting to assert their dominance over another person in a very messed-up way. It does not simply happen because a woman was dressed in a "provocative" manner. Old women get raped. Children get raped. Women in burkas get raped.

"I commiserate with most rape victims, but not those who dress provocatively. In a way, they asked for it."

No one asks to be raped. "Hello, rape me please," is not a line I've heard on the streets. No one deserves to have something as awful as rape happen to them. We're all human beings, and every single one of us deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. It is not "the woman's responsibility" to earn respect from men, Ms. Yip.

Maybe, one day, when society and the media finally learns that women are human beings, and not just objects to jerk off to--then, maybe then, women will get the respect that they deserve.