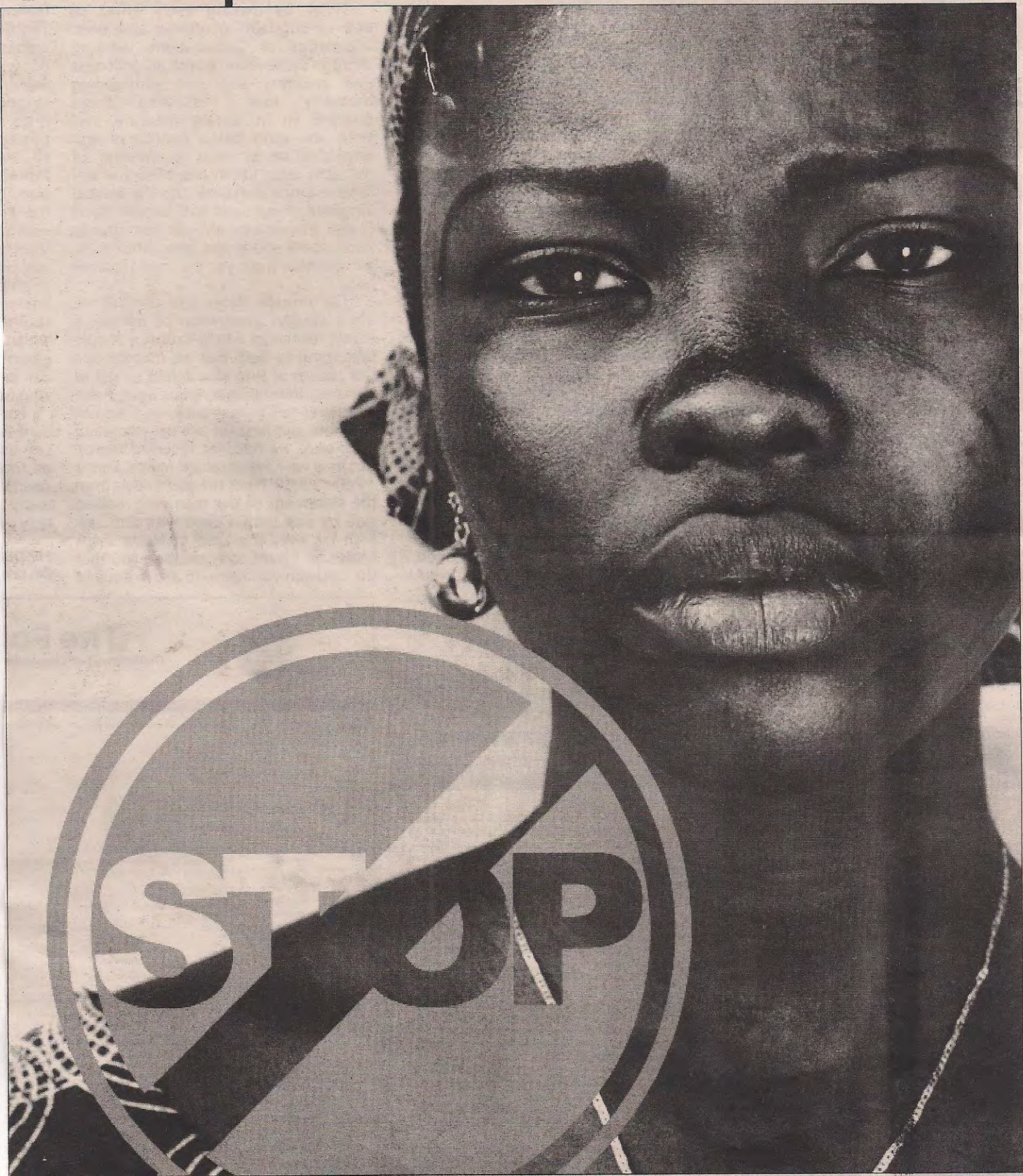


Is rape the victim's fault?



GENDER TALK

WITH PENELOPE KAMANGA

My honest opinion: Anti-rape campaigns spend too much time trying to scare the wits out of women, while perpetrators are all but ignored. Recently I walked along a certain university corridor and was drawn to a poster on the wall. It consisted of a woman with a beer in her hand looking drunk and almost naked. Behind her an aggressive looking male towered above. The caption read: "Are you making yourself vulnerable?"

Isn't it about time that we saw more advertisements and campaigns aimed at the perpetrators of violence and more work done to prevent, predominantly men, growing up assuming they can have this control over women? In addition, what message is this sending out to men? They are constantly portrayed as would be perpetrators of violence, with supposedly no control over their actions. It's been said before, but it still frustrates the hell out of me that women are still being held responsible for the possibility they may be attacked. Does a woman drinking alcohol, maybe becoming drunk, make a man - or for that matter another woman - attack her? It incenses me that women are still being told to act appropriately in order to reduce the risks of

being assaulted. Nothing wrong with that but I strongly feel the emphasis should be made on the perpetrators.

A short while ago I read an article about three women who had been attacked. The report contained details of the exact times the women were walking and it actually reported that all the women wore mini-skirts! What was their purpose in reporting the crime this way? I would have hoped we had moved on from this but it doesn't seem to be the case. Women reading such reports will be faced with the dilemma, do they only go out when it's considered 'safe' and should they abandon skirts forever?

Are women really to blame for being attacked by what they wear, how much they drink and what time they go out? It seems reckless to continue sending this incorrect message to society. Rape, assault and violence do not happen because of what someone is wearing, or whether they are at the wrong place at the wrong time.

There is always a choice. Perpetrators of violence choose to exercise that control of their victim. It is this behaviour, in my opinion, which should be receiving focus. There is finally work being done in schools to develop safe relationships and to examine the stereotypical

gender beliefs still held, more needs to be done earlier in order to stop this cycle of fear. Women should dress appropriately and not look provocative, we should be careful about where we leave our drinks. What about the actual perpetrators? What is happening to them? What about those who rape

little babies and those wearing long dresses what would have provoked them? The patriarchal system still subtly exists to support the continued abuse of women.

So are women to blame? Of course not! There is never an excuse for violence. Especially when it is rape!

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