Adrienne Rich?s ?Rape? Essay, Research Paper

Have you ever been in a situation where you had something horrible happen in

your life that you needed to do something about, but in order to do something

about it, you had to confront the problem and that caused you pain and more

troubles? I believe that to be the underlying conflict in Adrienne Rich?s

?Rape?. The main character who the speaker is talking to first is a woman

who has been sexually violated. She is a victim of a heinous and very private,

embarrassing crime. The officer that she has reported her situation to is a

policeman who patrols her area and who her family knows and trust. Her family is

very close to this officer, for ?he comes from your block, grew up with your

brothers.(2)? She doesn?t know him that well though, which makes her telling

him about the incident that much more painful and uncomfortable. She gives him

all the details of the crime and about her assailant. She has the idea that the

cop may have been her rapist. The woman has a certain bit of suspicion about the

officer, but she is not sure. ?Rape? is a poem about a woman who is

reporting a case of rape to a policeman who may just be the criminal responsible

for the offense himself. The violated woman isn?t convinced that the policeman

is the rapist, but the speaker defiantly suspects him. The rape victim knows

very little about the criminal in question, so the speaker tells the reader

about the incident, the evidence, and about enough facts to let them come up

with there own suspect. The first statement made by the speaker is ?There is a

cop who is both prowler and father.(1)? When he says ?prowler? the reader

automatically considers the officer to be a suspect, even before any background

is given on him. This is a very important line in the poem. It expresses that

the policeman is both a prowler and a father figure. He is suppose to be an ally

against crime and problems on his beat. The role of a policeman is to protect

the innocent from criminals and evils. But who protects you when officers of the

law are corrupt and are involved in unlawful actions? There is also another line

in this paragraph that the reader could interpret to be incriminating. The

speaker says the ?You hardly know him in his boots and silver badge, on

horseback, one hand touching his gun.(4-5)? Since she doesn?t know him that

well anyway, maybe instead of seeing him as an officer of the law, she sees him

as her assailant. The middle few stanza get a little more confusing. The second

stanza tells of how intimidating and powerful the policeman is. The third stanza

is where the woman takes her problems and concerns to the officer. The forth

stanza is quite intriguing. It starts off with a description the cop?s eyes, a

very soothing image. Its the last verse of this stanza that takes a turn of

suspicion against the officer. The thought of the ?the hysteria in your voice

pleases him best(20)? makes the reader believe that he is the rapist, a person

who would enjoy such a thing. The last stanza contains some good closing

thoughts. It is also interesting because it sounds like the speaker changes who

he is addressing. This is obvious in the first line of this stanza when the

speaker says ?He has access to the machinery that could get you put

away.(26)? The woman wouldn?t get put away, for she hasn?t done anything

wrong. The speaker is now talking to the rapist. The speaker later talks about

what the rapist says as being ?like a portrait of your confessor.(29)? In

these latter moments of this poem, maybe the woman is unsure of who violated

her. ?Rape?, by Adrienne Rich, is a poem about a woman who was violated. At

first the reader suspects the policeman as her rapist, then it seems like she

suspects someone else. After writing this paper, I come up with another possible

theory. I believe that no one she knows is her rapist, she just sees all males

as possible rapist and feels scared and threatened by them.