



Ask: Building Consent Culture

Kitty Stryker, Laurie Penny (Foreword), Carol Queen (Afterword), Virgie Tovar (Contributor), Roz Kaveney (Contributor), Jiz Lee (Contributor), JoEllen Notte (Contributor), A.V. Flox (Contributor), more... Porscha Coleman (Contributor), Richard Wright (Contributor), Shawn Taylor (Contributor), Cherry Zonkowski (Contributor), Alex Dymock (Contributor), Navarre Overton (Contributor), Tobi Hill-Meyer (Contributor), Cameryn Moore (Contributor), Eve Rickert (Contributor), Franklin Veaux (Contributor), Akilah S. Richards (Contributor), Laura Kate (Contributor), Takeallah Rivera (Contributor), Jetta Rae (Contributor), Kate Fractal (Contributor), Cinnamon Maxxine (Contributor), Zev Ubu (Contributor), Sez Thomasin (Contributor) ...less

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Have you ever heard the phrase “It’s easier to ask forgiveness than permission?” Violating consent isn’t limited to sexual relationships, and our discussions around consent shouldn’t be, either. To resist rape culture, we need a consent culture—and one that is more than just reactionary. Left confined to intimate spaces, consent will atrophy as theory that is never put into practice. The multi-layered power disparities of today’s world require a response sensitive to a wide range of lived experiences. In *Ask*, Kitty Stryker assembles a retinue of writers, journalists, and activists to examine how a cultural politic centered on consent can empower us outside the bedroom, whether it’s at the doctor’s office, interacting with law enforcement, or calling out financial abuse within radical communities. More than a collection of essays, *Ask* is a testimony and guide on the role that negated consent plays in our lives, examining how we can take those first steps to reclaim it from institutionalized power.

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From Reader Review Ask: Building Consent Culture for online ebook

Nicki Ivey says

This is going on my list of most valuable book of my year. I enjoyed most of the essays (only one or two were just too dense for me to take in in one reading), and they all offered value. I am so glad I impulse-shopped this after reading about it on BUST.

Amy says

Kitty has edited a book that provides a unique conversation on consent by discussing it as it relates to sex, law, society, government, mental health, cosplay, and other areas. Ask does not deliver its message with a gentle approach; it is in your face, it is radical, political, it tears down the culture in order to rebuild it. Ask is in your face, and it is exactly what we need.

In a conscious effort to include diversity, Kitty first approached oft-ignored non-white and non-cisgender people about contributing to the book. This allows for outstanding variety in the voices and stories provided to the readers, and makes Ask all the more powerful. This book is also very, very aware of the associations of certain words, as well as individual interpretations of those words. When using terms such as consent, power, and honor, time is taken by the authors to recognize the associations with these words, and to define them as they pertain to the work.

The essays are organized by topic, addressing consent in various places that make up society. There's the bedroom, where we hear from JoEllen Notte on mental health and the power dynamics of relying on others to care for you. The second section discusses consent in the school, including empowerment through bystander intervention rather than anti-rape initiatives, and asking questions as a form of harassment and power play. The following section on the jail explores a theme of informed consent, including ensuring comprehension of the Miranda warning. "A yes-or-no question simply isn't sufficient to ensure comprehension of complicated processes and rights" (pg. 66).

Next is consent in the workplace, stating that audience performance does not equal consent, and that while sexual relationships are an important area of discussion, "any relationship can be a problem" (pg. 88). In the home, we learn about the essential non-consensual relationship, family. In the hospital, we visit the beginning of the family with pregnancy, and the lack of asking permission to touch a child, whether in utero or otherwise.

The final section discusses the community, including consent in live action role play and sex parties. The community involves more consideration of nonverbal cues, and the idea that people are often afraid to say 'no,' stating that "it's better to confirm consent than it is to violate a boundary in your presumption" (pg. 166). The community also introduces an essay of neuroatypicals, written by an author who is on the autism spectrum. This essay examines the problematic belief in the asexual atypical, and the severe lack of sex education for those who we tend to think of as not capable of sexual relationships.

One of my favorite essays in Ask is written by a person who grew up in an abusive family, and who then

began to abuse those who loved him. He “tried to undo the effects of [his] abuse by using [his] power against others” (pg. 45). He states “I would never be powerless again” (pg. 45). He eventually realizes the error of his ways, and goes on to write this essay, which I enjoyed because the writer was very real and very honest. He experiences all the aspects of the exploration of power derived from toxic masculinity, as speaks from perspectives as both the powerless and powerful. “Power does not exist by itself, nor is it self-generating ... and power is not one-sided. There is always someone on the receiving end” (pg. 43).

There were a few essays that missed the mark for me, one of which was too heavy in academic language, and another involving wrestlers that seemed to jump around. However, *Ask* is a powerful, radical, and excellent book for those who come from many walks of life, as well as those who have trouble seeing what all goes into the topic of consent.

Check out my full review at <https://vulvaink.wordpress.com/2017/1...>

Eric says

It was a really good collection of essays about consent across most aspects of life. However I was left wanting more.

Stephanie says

3.5 stars!

Isaac Cross says

Review by Jordyn (XCBDSM.com) and Fox (KinkySprinkles.com)
Edited by Isaac Cross (XCBDSM.com)

Read the full review at XCBDSM.com

Ask is taking the phrase ‘it is easier to ask forgiveness than permission’, and rephrasing it to ‘if you don’t ask, the answer is always no’. The book takes all the sides of consent culture that might not be immediately apparent and pieces them together, to create a story with multiple angles of the issues outside the bedroom and opens the door to discussion about how to move forward and build our more comprehensive out-and-in-of-the-bedroom consent culture...

...the most significant weakness that was present throughout the book. Lots of problems were highlighted, but few solutions were proposed. Rather than being about “Building Consent Culture”, it ended up feeling more like an illumination of what we have now, and an argument for why we *need* to build consent culture, but without the blueprints to do so...

Read the full review at XCBDSM.com

Ryan Brady says

I had a brief conversation with Kitty Stryker after reading the book, and she said "part of what I wanted was to raise questions and make people think about consent in new ways." She has absolutely achieved that goal with this book.

The way that consent is approached in this book is revolutionary. Instead of looking at consent as a legal barrier delineating crime from acceptable behavior, the essays explore how consent permeates every aspect of our lives, and how violations of consent, regardless of legality, cause harm. The variety of perspectives is extremely broad, and I am certain that every single reader will find some point of view they weren't already familiar with.

The nuances of consent explored in this book are something that every single person should be thinking about, talking about, and adjusting their behavior so that we can live in a culture of safety and consent.

Anna says

Giving this 2 stars because there are a handful of essays in here that are genuinely well-developed and thought provoking (the essay about consent in LARPing immediately comes to mind). But the anthology itself is kind of a mess. First, the smug as hell introduction talking about how this anthology "does diversity" better than other anthologies. While I appreciate the commitment to working with a diverse group of writers on this project, it rubs me the wrong way to read a white person bragging about this. It seemed very self-aggrandizing. A lot of the pieces in this anthology either 1) make REALLY BIG CLAIMS without offering any sort of evidence or even a simple explanation of how the author got from point A to point B in their reasoning 2) are overtly or vaguely victim-blaming (ironic for an anthology about consent, no?)- see every time a writer chastises victims of sexual assault who choose to address the situation via the police/justice system 3) or are more suited to a diary or something you talk about with your support system. I also could really do without the several essays where the writer seemingly used their inclusion in the anthology as a means to brag about how sexually desirable/sexually active they are (cough cough the piece by Tobi Hill-Meyer) This was overall a disappointment.

Terri Strange says

A few informative essays interspersed with really weird, unrelated and not relevant to what I'd hoped the content was.

Cindy says

Should be required reading for every teenager and adult. The essays included are amazing.

Anabelle Bernard Fournier says

TBA

Katie says

I don't normally write reviews but I want to recommend this book to EVERYONE. I randomly saw it at my library the other day and picked it up by chance and just - wow. This was truly my first introduction to the concept of consent culture (at least, in any defined way) and it was an excellent one. The essays and contributors and their stories are so varied and interesting and give some and introspective crucial queer/POC/womens' voices, and truly show how our current rape culture permeates and affects so many industries, fields and parts of everyday lives, and who is affected most, AND gives useful resources, actions for transforming to a consent culture.

Martha says

When I saw on Facebook that Kitty Stryker was drumming up publicity for her new book Ask: Building Consent Culture, I was immediately curious to read it. Wanting to support what seemed like a worthy project, I also invited her to come on my weekly radio show Eros Evolution, and you can find the interview here.

To prepare for the radio interview, I opened her book to realise that it was separated into seven well thought out sections: In the Bedroom; In the School; In the Jail; In the Workplace; In the Home; In the Hospital; and In the Community. Of course! Consent does not and should not be limited to the individual or the sexual. There's dynamics of consent in all aspects of our lives, including within law, society, and governance.

In Stryker's introduction, she explains her desire to curate something that took the consent in "safe, sane, and consensual" seriously, while also recognizing and unpacking how systems of power complicate what we can say yes and no to. Ask: Building Consent Culture is the result – an anthology with 24 pieces brushing on many areas of that nuance.

Feminist author Laurie Penny opens the anthology with a piece about why this book is important, touching on the political landscape in the United States and the various ways consent culture is struggling to take root. Penny writes, "The liberation of women, queers, femmes, and female-identified people is about more than negative liberty—it is about more than "freedom from." It's not just freedom from rape, freedom from abuse, freedom from fear. It is also "freedom to"—freedom to express desire, to explore pleasure, to seek intimacy and adventure. Perhaps what we should be asking of sexual liberation is not the mere absence of violence. Perhaps we should be going for something beyond "Let's not rape each other." What if we can do better?"

Ask: Building Consent Culture attempts to give a diverse group of people space to suggest what they think could be done better. None of the essays purport to have THE answer, but rather, AN answer.

Once I delved into the essays, I appreciated learning about the FRIES model coined by Planned Parenthood (standing for Freely given; Reversible; Informed; Enthusiastic, and Specific) as part of the essay, “The Political is Personal” by Porscha Coleman.

I was drawn in and touched by what transpired in a bystander-intervention model role-play in “Rehearsing Consent Culture” by Richard M. Wright, and the possibilities of development of skills towards consent culture.

I cheered Shawn Taylor in “The Power of Men Teaching Men” in his personal journey of respecting the integrity of a woman’s body, and his emergence to holding other men accountable for their sexual violence.

I agreed with respecting “Bodily Autonomy for Kids” by Akilah S. Richard and her emotions that came up.

I teared up at Laura Kate’s “To Keep a Roof Over my Head, I Consented to Delaying my Transition”. By delaying her transition from male to female at puberty for a year, the irreversible changes to her body meant her current and future quality of life was affected.

There are indeed many voices, perspectives, and angles to dissecting rape culture, and to deciphering how to bridge that to consent culture. Stryker makes sure to cultivate a variety of voices in here, many of whom have not written on this topic publicly before. Her editing style leaves a lot of room for each contributor to speak from the heart and their own experience while also ensuring the pieces are accessible.

To round things off, Stryker wisely invited sex educator Carol Queen to write the Afterword. Queen honestly and vulnerably admits that while she has a thousand things to say about consent culture, there is still a lack of safe culture “when not being stopped is conflated with active consent”. She defines rape culture as “a culture that minimizes, ignores, or normalizes acts of sexual non-consent, does not adequately teach about consent, and does not seek to help people learn to pursue their desires in a consensual way.”

By this definition, we do have a rape culture to grapple with, yet each of us can do something towards building a consent culture. Reading this book is a start – with a list of resources in the back to encourage further exploration, may it also encourage action.

Kirsten says

This is fantastic. If you’ve been following conversations about consent in relation to sex, this book will take you to the next level. Almost every essay had me wanting to pull out my highlighter.

Ben says

This is a helpful crash course in consent, beyond the "permission-seeking" its generally understood to be in popular culture. While I found the writing inconsistent in quality and helpfulness, having authors from a variety of identities and experiences is so important. Thanks to @alicia for recommending this last year.

Audacia Ray says

Tired of all the reactive hot takes about whatever celebrity is currently under fire for consent-violating behavior but want good and provocative writing about consent and rape culture? READ THIS BOOK. It's vital. Clear arguments, real ideas about the interpersonal work that needs doing to end rape culture.
