



FRANCA VIOLA
Presentation from the Italian team in Boden Sweden
Let's Focus on gender

When she was seventeen, in 1965 Franca Viola got kidnapped while she was in her home in Alcamo (Palermo), after refusing the proposal of a young man.

Filippo Madonia, from a notorious mafia family, kept her segregated and abused her for a whole week with the help of twelve friends of his.

After that, he contacted Franca's family and proposed them the so called "shotgun wedding" considered by the Italian law of the time a sort of restoring compensation in case of sexual abuse.

Franca's father pretended to agree, in order to have his daughter released; in fact he called the police and made Melodia arrested for kidnapping.

In the following months, Franca Viola never accepted to consider the proposed marriage, so setting an example which would be followed by many women.

Actually according to the moral code of the time, a girl experiencing the same abuse, which means not virgin any longer, would have had to marry her raper: this was considered the only way she could save her own and her family's honour. If she refused, she would never get married, she would become a spinster and considered "dishonoured".

Luckily Franca Viola proved to be stronger than prejudices and got eventually married with someone of her own choice.

She has become a symbol of freedom and dignity for all the Sicilian women who would suffer the same kind of abuse in the following years; they were inspired and encouraged by her "saying no" and refusing a shotgun wedding.

She has also become an icon of the Italian feminist movement.

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