

Rampant Sexual Violence Against Women and Rape on College Campuses Across America

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Today a shameful culture of sexual violence permeates across thousands of America's college campuses. This dark cloud hanging over campuses has never adequately been dealt with by US institutions of higher education and, because of that fact, American women attending college in 2014 must live in growing daily fear of being sexually violated by their fellow male students at a never before seen rate.

[One in five](#) women report being a victim of sexual assault while studying at America's colleges and universities today. Another study determined that [one in four](#) college women have survived rape or attempted rape since age 14. A current trend estimates that [one in three](#) women will be sexually assaulted during her life. Take into account that the vast majority of victims choose not to report sex crimes to the authorities at all, a range anywhere from 60% up to 97% of sexually assaulted women will forego the stress of reporting sex crimes. When those kind of numbers are added to the overall equation, perhaps upwards of nearly half of all females attending college in America today are astoundingly being sexually violated, harassed and/or stalked on a regular basis. Though there are some who challenge these alarming numbers, keeping young women in pursuit of higher education in America safe from predatory male counterparts has never been a high priority until reaching its present crisis stage.

What is even more repugnant and telling is the men committing rape continue getting away with it with odds overwhelmingly on their side, giving them an emboldened advantage and sense of impunity that only motivates and reinforces them to brazenly rape again and again. Statistics show that sexual perpetrators will not stop at committing rape just once. Even if they get caught and receive treatment, recidivism rates for rapists are extremely high. They are far more apt to be serial rapists raping different women on average of six times before they are ultimately exposed and apprehended. Yet for many decades US colleges and universities have been quietly sweeping this mounting epidemic under the rug, concealing the truth from both the public and female students alike because the school's reputation and image are far more important than the safety and well being of their college coeds. Campus sexual assault is yet another sad and tragic crisis currently exploding amongst America's "best and brightest" enrolled at the nation's best ivory tower institutions today. Sexual assault becomes the latest US scandal brewing alongside the over trillion dollars in loan debt accumulating to pay for the ever-mounting costs of a college education.

One blatant example of corruption where sexual assault has been criminally mishandled is the [University of Montana](#) at Missoula. Both the university and city in 2012 were accused of a mass cover-up of at least 80 sex crimes occurring on campus over the previous three years. The football coach and athletic director were terminated while a senior administration official attempted to silence victims, altered or refused to process reports. Last February the

Department of Justice concluded the Missoula County District Attorney's office discriminates against the university sexual assault victims.

As a consequence of [deregulation](#), college administrations as well as the NCAA are increasingly coming under the umbrella of corporations and corporate sponsors for revenue. To court parents and prospective students, underreporting of rape has been a growing phenomenon. Squelching the truth about campus rape is committed for the sake of big money and big corporations that benefit acquisition of endowments, grants and financial support from alumni. If an institution develops a reputation for not providing a safe learning environment for its students, the school risks substantial loss of revenue. Like all powerful institutions in America, corruption, greed and public image rule, and ensuring the safety of its students has not been a priority.

A new analysis of college sexual assault reports amongst 1570 colleges with student enrollments over 1000 students compiled [by The Washington Post](#) reveals that the rate of increasing sex crimes reported to be committed on college campuses from 2010 to 2012 shows a sharp increase of [50%](#) in just three years. Many analysts and college spokespersons invoke the greater number of victims reporting offenses as the primary cause of the jump in numbers, quick to further add that schools' increased focus introducing more education and training programs on campus as well as more robust supportive interventions as the most plausible explanation. Of course they prefer to attribute this recent surge in reporting to the "glass half full" interpretation rather than the half empty view that would conclude that campus rape is only going up in recent years. But again these statistics include only known reported cases, not the enormously higher number of sexual crimes silently committed that remain unreported under the radar.

Of the list of 1570 schools, [Penn State University](#) totaled the highest number of sexual assault cases at 56 in 2012, up from just 4 in 2010. The extremely high media exposure covering the Jerry Sandusky scandal broke at Penn State in 2011 when the assistant football coach was eventually tried and convicted of abusing numerous young boys on campus. This heightened sensitivity at the school is attributed to the increased 2012 rate of 14 times the 2010 number.

But high profile sex scandals fail to explain [Harvard University](#) on record with just one less reported assault over the three year period behind Penn State at 83. Other colleges with the highest reported cases in the country include University of Michigan at 64, with more than twice the number in 2012 than either of the two preceding years, Ohio State with 61, University of California at Davis with 60, Stanford University with 59, Indiana University with 54, University of North Carolina at 52, Emory University in Atlanta also tied at 52, University of New Hampshire at 50. Other schools with a number of cases in the forties over the three year period in descending order include Michigan State University, University of California at Berkeley, University of Wisconsin, Princeton University, Amherst College, Yale University and UCLA.

Though a preponderance of large Midwestern public universities rank near the top, America's most prestigious Ivy League schools also are heavily represented, along with three highly rated California public universities along with a most prestigious private school Stanford representing the Far West. Only two schools from the South are included. The geographical distribution covers most of the nation though the Midwest holds the edge. Another overall observation is that virtually all these schools where the most sexual assaults have been reported in recent years also rank as the very top academic, most renowned

institutions in the country. It is far more likely that the best schools in the nation are ahead of the curve in encouraging victims to come forth than more rapists are attending America's best schools. Yet high intelligence and rape linked together supplies food for thought.

Though the three major service academies were not included in this Washington Post report, rates of reported sexual assaults at those prestigious military institutions are just as high or highest in all the nation. The [Air Force Academy](#) during the 2012-13 fiscal year had 45 assault cases reported, and that was down from 52 the year before, by far exceeding even Penn State from 2010-2012. Moreover, each of the service academies have little more than 4000 students compared to Penn State's nearly 47,000. The ratio of assaults per 1000 academy students is off the chart. Air Force Academy's worse year during 2011-12 was 11.82. The highest assault ratio per 1000 students amongst the entire 1570 civilian colleges was Gallaudet University in Washington DC at 11.39. Thus the men at the Air Force Academy, the Naval Academy and West Point, the so called cream of the crop representing the finest young men and future leaders of America, appear to be raping more women than any other schools in the country based on available reported information.

That said, the procedures of collecting and reporting data on sexual assaults vary from school to school. Therefore, those differential irregularities blur the capacity to discern any conclusive findings from this report. Moreover, [45%](#) of the 1570 colleges maintained that zero cases of assault occurred on their campuses. Due to the tendency of so many institutions to historically underreport, undoubtedly sexual assaults are far more frequent than the numbers making this list of colleges indicate. Schools specifying minimal or zero assaults may well be guilty of inaccurate reporting while those high on the list may actually be the result of robust efforts to reach and support victims to come forth, not necessarily that more assaults are taking place at those institutions.

A [2007 study](#) found that only 2% of sexually assaulted victims who were drunk and/or on drugs at the time of the incident dared to report the crime to the police and only 13% who were "physically forced" into victimization contacted local law enforcement. Typical reasons that cause rape victims from reporting is they do not want anyone else to know. Many are so scarred and ashamed they choose to suffer in silence alone. From this 2007 study near half of those physically coerced cited as their primary reason for not going to the police is they "did not want anyone to know," the exact [same result](#) found a decade earlier. This finding indicates that as victims the pervasive fear of being publicly exposed to others' scrutiny and judgment has not changed in recent years, which of course has only contributed to the general culture leading to sexual violence that is gripping college campuses today. It also reflects a continuing prevailing attitude that reporting sexual crimes is neither worth the hassle nor the humiliation. Moreover, victims' persistent and unchanging perception over time also indicates little to no progress being made to assist victims in feeling any safer or more supported in their choice to report. Otherwise, more assault victims would be disclosing more rape incidents to law enforcement.

Another factor compounding the problem of rape victims failing to report the crime to the police is the result of lack of education and understanding on what constitutes criminal sexual assault. From that same [2007 study](#) 35% of the respondents stated that were unclear if a crime was committed or harm was intended. Numerous myths abound that rape must always involve a stranger or overt acts of violence cause many victims to not recognize they were sexually assaulted.

Still another reason rape largely goes unreported is that victims commonly perceive the

police will not believe them, take them seriously and not pursue investigating the case. They are partially correct in that [only 18%](#) of reported cases result in convictions. When unreported rapes are taken into account, only approximately [3%](#) of rapists will ever serve any time in prison. Through the media as well as hearing of others' experiences with rape, victims are somewhat aware of how a public rape trial too often places the victim's character on trial instead of the accused. The stress caused by the legal ordeal can be traumatic and simply not deemed worth the cost, particularly since so few defendants are convicted and serve any prison time for rape. Fear of retribution from the perpetrator also influences victims from reporting the crime.

In situations of date rape where victims know the perpetrator, reporting the crime often carries a negative backlash toward the victim, particularly amongst students' circle of friends and social network, and of course magnified even more on smaller campuses and towns. After suffering the trauma of rape, reporting the crime risks the all too common scenario whereby the victim is then only re-victimized by being ostracized as a social pariah. This [double victimization](#) that brands, blames and stigmatizes rape victims may lead to loss of friends, the victim dropping out of school, three times more likely to suffer from major depression, six times more likely to experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and [four times](#) more likely to contemplate suicide. A rape victim is 13 times more likely to abuse alcohol as an unhealthy, self-medicating coping mechanism while 26 times more likely to abuse drugs. Considering the dangerous risks that reporting may bring in the form of unbearable pain, anguish and disastrous consequences when victims are brave enough to seek justice through the legal system, it is no wonder that so few rape victims even go to the police. With so much stacked against the female victim, the male rapist wins and remains unimpeded to rape again and again, protected by a toxic climate of both social and legal impunity.

Another critical factor that permits predators to continue victimizing women is the fact that when the vast majority fail to report, no evidence collected from [hospital](#) rape kits used to track down and convict the perpetrator exists. Additionally prevention of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases are assured by prompt medical intervention. Unless the victim chooses to go immediately to the hospital or medical clinic after the incident, not enough conclusive evidence can be brought to trial to convict the guilty. Thus, law enforcement and medical records are both required to remove the rapists from raping again and placing them behind bars where they belong.

There are certain [fraternities](#) on campuses across America that have notorious reputations for excusing drunken aggressive party behavior that frequently results in gang rape. Most of the money from fraternities is allocated to pay insurance that covers settlements in their high incidence of sexual assault cases. The old rationalized "boys will be boys" sense of entitlement is still all too common, and particularly if the perpetrators happen to be high profile [collegiate athletes](#). Where big money, big sports and big college programs are involved, violent perpetrators traditionally rewarded and glorified for displaying violence on the playing field are given a free pass when it comes to their violence toward women on campus. Again, the deeply embedded American culture of violence blurs right into an extended culture of violence toward women.

Last week Senator [Claire McCaskill](#) (D-MO) showed her frustration based on her finding from a national survey that one in five college athletic departments at universities are given oversight regarding sexual assault cases involving their team athletes and staff. Obviously major fallout from the 2011 Penn State University case of Coach Sandusky's serial

molestations covertly withheld by famed football coach Joe Paterno and his athletic department has the senator shuttering at the thought that so many school athletic departments are still in positions overseeing potential misconduct that too often protect the guilty at the expense of the victim.

[Senator McCaskill](#) also was dismayed to learn from the same survey a whopping 40% of 236 college presidents at private nonprofit, public and for-profit schools across the country claimed that their institutions have not conducted even one investigation of a sexual assault case in the last five years. She suspects that most of those schools are “either in denial or incompetent,” not buying that no assaults were ever committed. At this country’s 50 largest public universities and 40 largest private, nonprofit colleges a separate survey results shows that 11% of the schools did not employ a Title IX coordinator. Federal regulations require hiring a coordinator. In summary, her findings demonstrated how poorly equipped colleges are at properly handling sexual misconduct cases dictated by Title IX regulations.

Also alarming is the fact that the survey shows that [one in three](#) schools do not offer sexual assault training for their students and one in five fail to provide training for their staff. The Missouri senator along with New York’s Senator Kirsten Gillibrand are leading a Congressional committee tasked with creating legislation to decrease sexual assault on college campuses by improving how cases are handled by universities in conjunction with law enforcement. Though McCaskill hopes to pass legislation by the end of this year, it is more likely to be delayed until sometime next year.

Though priority is urgently weighed toward protecting women as potential rape victims, coordinating a standard national policy that would apply to both local law enforcement agencies working closely in unison with all American colleges and universities is not an easy endeavor. Last January the [Obama administration](#) has called for a task force of college administrators, student victims, sex abuse advocacy groups and legal representatives to come together under the auspices of the Department of Education’s White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault to formulate specific uniform guidelines and policies that will carry strictly enforced adherence by all colleges in efforts to stem the epidemic tide. Currently 60 US colleges are under investigation for alleged violations of Title IX laws that currently govern how colleges are supposed to respond to incidents involving sexual misconduct. Currently under the Clery Act colleges and universities are required to report all sexual assault cases to the Department of Justice. The mandated guidelines that will soon be going into effect will rescind the Clery Act and mandate that all institutions additionally track and report accounts of sexual harassment and stalking as well.

The US [Department of Education](#) that has recently begun releasing its preliminary guidelines toward establishing an explicit national protocol scheduled to be published in November places college administrations into an emerging mandated formal judicial role of adjudicating all sexual assault and misconduct cases involving their students. This is separate and in addition to already established law enforcement and criminal court system that historically investigate and prosecute criminal sexual assault cases. Another mandated option for both the accused and the victim at the college administrative hearing will be the accompanied presence of legal counsel if so desired. The school will control how much input and participation that person in the advisor role will have. A huge distinction between a criminal court trial of a sexual assault case and the proposed university hearing to adjudicate sexual assault cases is that in criminal court a jury’s guilty verdict must be based on clear and convincing evidence whereas in the school hearing a lesser level of proof is

sufficient to declare the guilt of the accused party. This difference obviously works against the accused.

A growing number of [college administrators](#) reacting to these newly imposed guidelines fear they will open a Pandora's box to litigation against the universities. Several cases have already been successfully brought against colleges by male students found guilty of sexual misconduct. Critics claim that too big a federal government overstepping its boundaries and authority will only result in more costly regulation and control creating only more problems. Taking on the additional role and burden that some see as duplicating what the judicial system already is supposed to do will be counterproductive and more problematic. Some say the additional costs of implementing and operating these formalized guidelines will be passed onto the students that are already overburdened with enormous education costs. Others cite the coercive tactics the federal government is bringing to bear on universities under the threat of cutting off their education subsidies from Washington that universities depend on to stay in business.

All these concerns notwithstanding, the overwhelming consensus amongst students and victim advocacy groups believe that universities brought this current crisis situation on themselves by their own past neglect and lack of responsiveness and support toward sexual assault victims. Because higher education institutions have been historically so remiss in allowing assaults to increase with minimal consequences for male offenders, often customarily dismissing cases outright, the systemic mishandling of sexual misconduct at US colleges over many decades has only fostered and perpetuated this present culture of violence toward women.

Still others have expressed concerns that the rights of the defendant may be violated in these university adjudicated proceedings. In the rush for judgment in pursuit of justice, young male students feel they may be railroaded by false or grossly exaggerated claims in a cultural hysteria created by this unprecedented focus sweeping the nation. Similar to how daycare facility workers in the 1980's were falsely accused of engaging in acts of sexual abuse toward children, and a toxic climate quickly grew out of interviewing and leading children and adults alike to reclaim false memories in witch hunts to identify and demonize the accused, fear that similar injustices will befall innocent victims as targets of a get-the-rapist crusade. Especially where alcohol and drugs are involved, consensual versus non-consensual sex is so often blurred and has a potential for zealous anti-rape crusaders to cross ethical lines. Lawyers are even telling male students to videotape their sexual encounters as potential evidence that the sex was consensual, and even in states where non-consensual videotaping may be illegal, the cost of violating may be worth the risk since rape is a criminal felony. Men (and some women) today often will cite the extreme reactionary consequence when an innocent compliment might be misconstrued in work or educational settings by a female peer as sexual harassment in what men view as the [emerging culture of female victimization and paranoia](#). As an early example of this misplaced justice, the unfair trial of the three accused [Duke lacrosse players](#) a few years ago illustrates radical feminist rush to judgment and politically correct hype gone wrong. Finally, in the mandated college hearings a [lesser burden of proof](#) based on mere preponderance of evidence poses a distinct disadvantage for the accused.

Turning to the more common extreme after a miscarriage of justice befalls a legitimate victim of sexual assault, as a last resort many victims have recently gone public via [media airwaves](#) impassionedly illuminating their extreme cases of gross injustice. A number of female victims have historically been instructed by college administrators and even

counseling staff to not report incidents, and/or were even blamed for causing the assault. Seeing these women telling their heartbreaking stories delivers a visceral response of outrage at various school officials' insensitivity, ignorance and hurtful callousness. No young woman should have to endure such horror that permanently mars her educational experience and potentially her entire life. Many have to live daily with their rapists who too often continue attending classes and eating in the same dining halls with their victims because schools have not done their jobs. With so many high profile cases increasingly covered by the media, colleges and universities are now being forced to take a more proactive and robust stand to provide a safer, stronger support mechanism for victims while meting out more fair and appropriate punishment for the perpetrators.

Though this presentation of campus sexual assault has focused on female victims and male perpetrators, it bears mention that young men attending college are also victims of sexual assault. Male victims are especially prone to not report abuse. So little records are kept on male victims, the numbers are difficult to assess. The FBI Uniform Crime Report fails to even provide data on male rape victims. In most male rape victim cases the perpetrator is another male. Survey data suggest that acquaintance rape incidence on campuses may involve up to [10% male victims](#). The increasing supportive services and improved handling of their cases need to engage in further outreach to connect and protect them too. No human should suffer from such a heinous crime as sexual assault.

A few months ago I wrote an [article](#) exposing a similarly pathetic reality within the military of the alarming rates of sexual assault rising in both all the service academies as well as throughout all the US armed forces. As a West Point graduate and former Army officer, I observed firsthand the culture of disrespect toward women within the ranks of the good ol' boys club that has given rise to the current implosion of misconduct within all the military services. In 2011 alone there were [26,000](#) reported cases of sexual assault in the US military.

In response to a full year of disturbing rape headlines up and down the armed forces, the Pentagon plunged headfirst into damage control overdrive, replete with repeated claims that its extensive self-policing efforts were already paying off. This PR blitz to protect its good ol' boy club impunity was accompanied by vociferous lobbying of Congress in order to retain jurisdictional control over all its sexual assault cases within the military hierarchy, thus maintaining status quo of commanding officers (nearly always male) presiding over cases. In March this year [the Senate](#) collapsed under Pentagon blitzkrieg pressure and voted to not allow civil courts to take over this out of control epidemic. Thus, after a year of uncomfortable heat, having dodged a bullet, top brass breathed a sigh of relief and life in the military quickly went back to business as usual. And female soldiers will never get a fair shake as long as the good ol' boys remain criminally in charge.

At the same time that Congress dropped the ball, women in the military were struck with another low blow when verdicts in two extremely high profile cases went against the female accusers. A Naval Academy football player was acquitted the same day that Army General Sinclair received a slap on the hand with only a small fine. These back-to-back setbacks for women in uniform courageous enough to seek justice only carry the sobering consequence of fewer victims in the future even bothering to step forward to report rape.

Completely related as a parallel process and microcosm within the macrocosm, women are being sexually assaulted both in and out of the military as well as both in America and around the world also at disturbing rates. These shocking trends reverberating globally

suggest that men in the twenty-first century have made little to no progress in their relations with women, giving rise to the inevitable question as to whether the human species is even evolving at all. Such high profile cases of women being wantonly gang raped and murdered on a bus in India or a rape victim being stoned to death in Saudi Arabia, worldwide violence against women is on the rise and never been more visibly in our face. Former US President and Annapolis graduate himself [Jimmy Carter](#) recently went on record declaring that violence against women is the “worst and most pervasive and unaddressed human rights violation on Earth.”

With the prospect of World War III looming on the approaching horizon, with multiple regional conflicts already violently erupting and escalating at the same time as the spiked surge of women’s mistreatment skyrocketing out of control on a global scale, drawing the dismal conclusion that humans may in fact only be regressing becomes difficult to repudiate. An extremely high correlation has always existed between cultures prone to war violence also being most prone to violence against women. And as a result, the state of the modern world hanging precariously imbalanced has never looked more bleak.

Despite the ominous signs of increasing global violence, all the increasing attention and focus on campus violence toward women is waking America up to its epidemic crisis. Positive signs are the coordinated efforts coming from both the Obama administration’s task force and Senator McCaskill’s committee along with the growing grassroots community movement amongst many young women and some supportive men on campuses across the nation to take empowered action. Various Title IX groups have emerged on campuses as self-help groups to know and learn their civil rights. Mass demonstrations have been taking place around the country in unified solidarity toward embracing the rights of women and all human rights. Like never before programs are being implemented on numerous campuses to train and educate students to increase awareness and support in taking empowered preventive action against assault that include bystanders. More effective communication and coordination between college administrations and local law enforcement is also in process. With unprecedented resolve, numerous advocacy groups and school programs are now underway to curb the violence. Efforts appear to be bearing fruit in that more victims are reporting sexual assault than ever before. The long neglected system at colleges and universities designed to protect and support women is slowly improving while more robust mechanisms are being enacted to hold the perpetrators more accountable.

Joachim Hagopian is a West Point graduate and former US Army officer. He has written a manuscript based on his unique military experience entitled [“Don’t Let The Bastards Getcha Down.”](#) It examines and focuses on US international relations, leadership and national security issues. After the military, Joachim earned a masters degree in Clinical Psychology and worked as a licensed therapist in the mental health field for more than a quarter century. He has worked extensively with sex abuse victims. He now concentrates on his writing.

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