

The Recent History of Student Led Initiatives Against Sexual Assault and Rape Culture
on the Campus of Lafayette College

By Natalia Nevarez

WGS 340

On the Wednesday, May 3rd, 2017, The Mill Series, a series of panel discussion that use common right wing arguments to frame different topics in order to address ideological biases in higher education, held their last panel discussion of the year on sexual assault. These panel discussion were organized in collaboration between students and a professor in the government and law department. This series was created in an attempt to include different voices, opinions, and ideologies that are sometimes drowned out. The panel discussion was titled "Due Process and Sexual Assault Policy on College Campuses" and a guest speaker who wrote a book on sexual assault on college campus was hired to speak about his book and lead a discussion on this subject. I chose not to attend the event once I saw the page for the event on Facebook with a cover photo that read "sexual assault is extremely over reported on college campuses¹."

The majority of the accounts from students who attended the panel discussion shared very similar sentiments regarding the framing of the discussion and the inconsistencies in what the speaker was saying. The speaker, KC Johnson, who is describe as a "two-time Obama donor and associate professor of history at Brooklyn College, will give a talk entitled, "Due Process in Campus Sexual Assault Cases." in the description for the event, began the discussion by speaking about due process and quickly transitioned to sharing a narrative regarding the importance of due process or at least it is assumed that, that was the purpose of this story. In this narrative a female college student accused three male lacrosse players of sexual assault and thanks to

¹ I believe the Facebook event was deleted shortly after the event due to the fact that many student felt this event was promoting rape culture. Therefore, I cannot cite this source.

due process all three men were found to be innocent of this crime. Saving these three men from a lifestyle of shame for a crime they did not commit. After Johnson was finished stating that about 96-98% of sexual assault allegations are most likely true, he immediately followed this statement up with a series of pie charts that would disprove the figure he stated. The pie charts suggest that by recategorizing cases in terms of evidence and including sexual assault cases that had little to no evidence with cases of false allegations, the percentage of true sexual assault cases is lower than 96%. Then he proceeded to offer possible solutions to the issue of false sexual assault accusation. Johnson suggested that incorporating cross examination as part of sexual assault cases would help alleviate issues or misunderstanding.

I was in disbelief that not only was this discussion happening on my campus, but this was topic was developed by students and a faculty member. In addition, KC Johnson was purposefully hired and paid to facilitate this discussion on sexual assault. Not only was I shocked that people feel that sexual assault is topic people can have ideological differences about, but I was confused. I thought to myself, how did Lafayette College go from having The Real Men of Lafayette posters advocating against rape culture to inviting and paying for someone to reinforce and reproduce narratives that feed into rape culture?

Therefore, this paper will provide the history of student led initiatives against sexual assault and rape culture on the campus of Lafayette College with the inclusion of literature provide theoretical frameworks and definitions for a discussion of the relationship between sexual assault, rape culture, and institutions of higher education.

Using Lafayette College a case study, this paper will argue that in terms of the findings, or lack of findings, that Lafayette College specifically as an institution in recent years has developed a strategy to acknowledge the presence of sexual assault and rape culture on campus without actually making reformatory changes to the institution or directly challenging rape culture on campus. Instead, Lafayette College propels narratives of students against sexual assault and rape culture forward to gain the title of a progressive institution, while simultaneously ignoring and quietly sweeping events like the Mill Series panel discussion on sexual assault under the rug.

Hence, my inability to find anything that advertised or covered this event in a public manner other than a description for the event in the calendar of events that is available on the Lafayette College website. However, to find the event you need to have the pre existing knowledge of either the day the event took place or the exact name of the event. In other words, the event could have simply never happened. It is not enough for institutions to acknowledge that sexual assault and rape culture exist on campus, but the administration should be actively challenging rape culture not giving it a microphone and some pie charts. If rape culture is not challenged then the conditions that lead to rape remain present on campus. In other words, "campuses and those of us who work on them do what is right, despite the consequences in terms of donations, media attention, and even career changes" (Paludi 23).

"Despite an abundance of prevention efforts on college campuses, multiple studies demonstrate the continuous prevalence of rape, especially acquaintance rape (AdamsCurtis & Forbes, 2004; Boswell & Spade, 1996). One explanation is that college campuses foster date rape cultures, which are environments that support beliefs conducive to rape and increase risk factors related to sexual violence (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993; Sanday, 2007). Despite attempts to

dismantle rape culture on college campuses, for the most part, such cultures remain intact for a variety of reasons (Sanday, 2007)" (Burnett 466).

Lafayette was established in 1826 as a college for men. It is not clear what sexual assault looked like on campus during the 19th century due to the fact that a sexual assault policy did not exist nor was sexual assault between men reported. There is also very little evidence to prove that sexual assault was even a topic discussed as a campus, until the student body began pushing for Lafayette to become a coeducational institution in the 1960s. One of the first documented accounts of a public discussion of rape on campus was in 1964, in an article from *The Lafayette* that introduces the new Chaplain, Rev. F. Peter Sabey, to campus. The title of the article is "Rev. Sabey on Rape, Honor, Freedom." In the article that covered the sermon Rev. Sabey gave for the men, who at the time were the only students able to attending Lafayette and were required by the college to attend Chapel service or have a "theological confrontation," he briefly mention how sexual assault and seduction are the same because they are both violations of the other person's integrity and then proceeds to use rape a way to humor the audience ("Rev. Sabey on Rape, Honor, Freedom"). However, the true purpose of this sermon was to draw the men into the church.

It is not till three years later that the word "rape" was used in the school newspaper to describe sexual assault. In other words, there are exactly 283 issues of *The Lafayette* that include the word "rape," however the majority of the times the word was used in the articles it was in context of forcing someone to do something against their will but not in a sexual manner. For example, a student said that the chapel

requirement was a "spiritual rape" because he was forced to practice religion without giving consent ("Rev. Sabey on Rape, Honor, Freedom").

The other early mentions of sexual assault come after the publishing of the "Legal Aspect of Student Conduct" which caused an interesting response from the student body. This article covered an event where a group of men met with the colleges attorney and asked question regarding the code. The picture used for the article is 6 men laughing hysterically, however when you read the article the summary of the questions the writer chose to include were all about different forms of rape. A pattern begins to emerge in the narratives that include public discussions of sexual assault: these men use sexual assault as a vehicle for a joke. While at the time, rape culture was not yet a concrete, acknowledged concept, this is an early example of rape culture. By attaching sexual assault to humor it automatically devalues how serious sexual assault can be.

Once women were introduced into the college in 1970 and due to the Clery Act, the college was forced to create a new policy for sexual assault that abided by set of guidelines. However, in regards to students grouping together against sexual assault and rape culture it was not until the 1990s that narratives of sexual assault on campus had begun to be revealed.

In 1994 there was a stir on campus caused by a sociology professor who wrote an article called "The Myth of Rape at Lafayette" in response to "Take Back the Night," a student led event that happens across college campuses in the United States that creates a public, safe place for victims of sexual assault to come together, with anyone

who identifies as an ally, to share their stories and experiences. Therefore, for a professor to write an article that "suggested that there was no evidence of a rape crisis on our campus as claimed by a few highly vocal and ideologically driven faculty and students" (Schneiderman 4).

"The October 22, 1993 issue of The Lafayette contained an article by Howard Schneiderman titled, "The Myth of Rape at Lafayette." The author stated that "for at least the last six years the official campus crime statistics for Lafayette....indicate that there have been no reported rapes." The October 29, 1993 issue of The Lafayette contained several responses to Mr. Schneiderman's opinion piece, including a letter from Donald Kirts and Karen Forbes of the Counseling Center which challenged Mr. Schneiderman's basic premises, as well as letters from other faculty and students. Is the absence of reported rapes indicative of the absence of rapes? Is the absence of reported rapes an issue of under-reporting? Is rape at Lafayette a myth, as claimed by Mr. Schneiderman?" (Gallup 4)

No one asks to be sexually harassed, but these reports have been tragically multiplying due to colleges neglecting the rights of students because colleges want to protect their reputation and not report the crimes correctly. This would be a prime example of faculty perpetuating rape culture by denying that sexual assault is a problem.

"Brownmiller identified a number of deeply ingrained myths about rape: that it is motivated by uncontrollable male lust rather than violence, that female sexuality is inherently masochistic and inviting of rape, and that women "cry rape with ease and glee." Against Our Will offered a coherent counter-discourse about rape, reframing it as an act of power, even mass terrorism, which had the consequence of controlling female behavior. In other words, Brownmiller argued, rape was fundamental to the patriarchal domination of women" (Cohen 4).

While rap culture can be loud like the laughs on the men in the 1960s or come as the complete denial of the sexual assault altogether, they are both just as dangerous for everyone. In order for sexual assault to stop being a part of the experience of students

in higher education, college campus must be to challenge and break down rape culture.

The Real Men of Lafayette



James Kull
Vice President of Student Government, member of Delta Chi Fraternity, member of the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

Brian MacIntyre
President of the Delta Chi Fraternity, member of the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

Drew Liberman
President of the Delta Chi Fraternity, member of the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

Philip Stachura
President of the Delta Chi Fraternity, member of the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

Patrick O'Hara
President of the Delta Chi Fraternity, member of the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

John Garry
President of the Delta Chi Fraternity, member of the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

Scott Brinkman
President of the Delta Chi Fraternity, member of the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

Joseph Clark
President of the Delta Chi Fraternity, member of the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

David Clark
President of the Delta Chi Fraternity, member of the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

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This poster produced in cooperation with the Delta Chi Fraternity and the Association of Fraternities, Kappa Alpha, Phi Kappa Phi, and the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

Poster designed by Ryan Young.

The Real Men of



Anthony Pagan

Anthony Pagan is a 35-year-old, 5-foot-10-inch, 170-pound, black male with short, dark hair and a mustache. He is a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park, where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. He is currently employed as a Sales Representative for a local company.



Christopher Lopez

Christopher Lopez is a 32-year-old, 5-foot-8-inch, 160-pound, black male with short, dark hair and a mustache. He is a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park, where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. He is currently employed as a Sales Representative for a local company.



Scott Heston

Scott Heston is a 30-year-old, 5-foot-10-inch, 170-pound, black male with short, dark hair and a mustache. He is a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park, where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. He is currently employed as a Sales Representative for a local company.



Lashawn Adams

Lashawn Adams is a 28-year-old, 5-foot-8-inch, 160-pound, black female with short, dark hair and a mustache. She is a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park, where she earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. She is currently employed as a Sales Representative for a local company.



Mark Gonzalez

Mark Gonzalez is a 30-year-old, 5-foot-10-inch, 170-pound, black male with short, dark hair and a mustache. He is a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park, where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. He is currently employed as a Sales Representative for a local company.

**Take
a Stand.
Speak
Out.**



Mark Allen

Mark Allen is a 28-year-old, 5-foot-8-inch, 160-pound, black male with short, dark hair and a mustache. He is a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park, where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. He is currently employed as a Sales Representative for a local company.



Susan Smith

Susan Smith is a 25-year-old, 5-foot-6-inch, 150-pound, black female with short, dark hair and a mustache. She is a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park, where she earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. She is currently employed as a Sales Representative for a local company.



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