



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

*A NATIONAL VOICE FOR STATE
AND LOCAL ADVOCATES DEDICATED
TO ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE.*

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NAESV Response to Campus Sexual Assault Column in the Wall Street Journal

The Wall Street Journal
1211 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036
Transmitted by email to: wsj.ltrs@wsj.com

Dear Editor:

When it comes to sexual violence on college campuses, there should be no double standard. There should be one standard: rape is always serious and always a crime.

In a deeply irresponsible Wall Street Journal editorial, columnist James Taranto championed the perceived plight of college men who are (or could be) accused of sexually assaulting an intoxicated female, particularly when the men are themselves intoxicated. Alcohol consumption and sexual assault are realities on college campuses nationwide, and it's an important conversation to have. In having the conversation, however, it's important to be armed with facts. Here are five:

Fact 1: Men who rape use alcohol and intoxication to commit their crimes.

Research on sexual offending behavior has demonstrated that men who rape are predators who know what they're doing, attack multiple victims and deliberately use alcohol to commit their crimes. They look for intoxication in their victims and/or they facilitate that intoxication. They know that alcohol renders their victims more vulnerable to assault, less likely to remember it, and less likely to be believed or taken seriously if they report it.

Fact 2: Men who rape are often "good guys" in the community's eyes.

Most men are not rapists, and those who are blend into their schools and communities with ease. These undetected rapists are often well-liked, successful members of society – such as star

athletes. Such rapists escape justice in part because their social status makes them appear unlikely or even incapable of committing a crime.

Fact 3: Rape is not a reaction to regret or miscommunication. It's a crime.

There is a misconception that when a female college student reports that she was sexually assaulted while intoxicated, she is feeling regretful and/or wishes to ruin the reputation of an innocent man. If someone is intoxicated to the extent that their memory is impaired, then it means they are legally unable to consent to sex. Furthermore, false reporting of rape is very rare. Many survivors of sexual assault are blamed for their own victimization, and very few rape cases are successfully prosecuted, particularly if the survivor was intoxicated when she was assaulted. The motivation for women to falsely accuse someone of rape is low.

Fact 4: Being raped while intoxicated is traumatic.

In his article, Mr. Taranto characterizes a sexual assault at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst as being "at the other end of the spectrum" and that "the unambiguous brutality of the alleged Amherst attack is atypical." The assumption is that an assault that occurs on a sidewalk and involves the survivor being pinned, kissed, bitten, and raped is more serious or impactful than a rape that occurs at a party in which the survivor is intoxicated. In reality, being incapacitated by alcohol and assaulted by a fellow partygoer is often profoundly traumatic, impacting the survivor's physical and emotional health. To minimize the experience of such survivors is both cruel and inaccurate.

Fact 5: Ending rape is not about being male or female. It's about being human.

Mr. Taranto's article includes the importance of bystander intervention in stopping sexual assault, and we agree. But while bystander intervention is essential, it is not about being chivalrous. It's about doing what's right. Mr. Taranto suggests a choice between chivalry and assault which is demeaning to both men and women as human beings.

The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence believes it is possible to create cultures in which we collectively take responsibility for each other's welfare--men and women together--so that those who will actively try to prey upon vulnerability will find us standing in their way rather than licensing their criminal behavior.

Sincerely,
Monika Johnson Hostler
Board President