



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

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

December 8, 2014

The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence Believes “Jackie”

The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence is heartbroken and outraged by the events that have unfolded since Friday afternoon based on Rolling Stone’s investigative coverage of sexual assault at the University of Virginia. We commend Rolling Stone for journalistic courage in their intention to reveal the true nature of sexual violence, the collective code of complicity that allows it to flourish, and its devastating impact on survivors. We were shocked at Rolling Stone’s quick attempt to blame the victim when certain facts of the story were questioned and believe they are on the right track by beginning to take responsibility for their own fact-checking.

We are very experienced survivor advocates and therefore do not take minor discrepancies in certain details of “Jackie’s” story as any reason to begin doubting that she experienced horrific sexual violence by a number of perpetrators. The research on traumatic memories is clear: those who survive trauma can often have difficulty consolidating the details of the experience and discrepancies are not uncommon. The research of Dr. Rebecca Campbell of Michigan State University has been especially important on this point. Understanding the nature of traumatic memories is absolutely critical to begin holding perpetrators and institutions accountable. If it remains way too easy to discredit survivors given minor discrepancies, sexual violence will remain far too pervasive. Take, for example, the claim that no formal party occurred at the named fraternity house the night in question. Is it not possible the fraternity had informal get-togethers that did not make it on their official calendar of events? Looking at issues of gang rape by fraternities is certainly not at all new.

Unfortunately, with sexual assault currently at the center of public discourse in a meaningful way, we are not surprised by backlash. Powerful institutions have gone to great lengths in both the near and distant past to obfuscate the problem, bolstered by the oppressive beliefs of individuals, and we have not seen the end of these tactics. We condemn those who have publicly revealed information about “Jackie” and trolling behaviors on social media. Whether it is sexual violence in faith institutions, universities, the military, or prisons, we cannot afford to let up on our efforts--sexual violence must not be left in the shadows and survivors must not be left alone.

We are making progress--societal acceptance of sexual violence is not as firm as it once was. Survivors are willing to put their lives on the line because accountability for this epidemic social injustice—both individually and collectively—is so vitally important. We call on each of you to stand with survivors and with us as we say no to sexual violence and pledge to take collective responsibility to end it.