



Taylor Waits, Kimiya
Factory and Coreen Hale

ADVOCATING FOR
QUEER AND BIPOC
SURVIVORS OF
RAPE AT PUBLIC
UNIVERSITIES

The #ChangeRapeCulture Movement

Queer and LGBT+ Studies

Collection Editor
PATRICK THOMSEN

LIVED PLACES
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Abstract

Advocating for Queer and BIPOC Survivors of Rape at Public Universities: The #ChangeRapeCulture Movement offers theoretical groundings, model strategies, and practical solutions to understanding how rape culture affects public university culture. In 2019, at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), #ChangeRapeCulture, created and led by queer Black students, worked to champion the national conversation about rape culture. Since then, the movement has gone from student protests to conferences, workshops, fundraisers, community events, and youth meetings about the reality of rape culture in America.

#ChangeRapeCulture aims to highlight stories from BIPOC, LGBTQIA2S+ survivors; advocate for their rights; and dismantle the harmful stereotypes that disadvantage sexual violence survivors in real life. Every survivor of sexual abuse has a story to tell, and the organizers of #ChangeRapeCulture are willing to risk everything to make sure these stories are being spread to as many people as possible. It happens way more than you think. All you have to do is listen.

Keywords

Education, gender, lived experience, activism, LGBTQIA2S+, sexual violence, student-led movements, culture, stereotype, rhetoric.

Trigger warning

This book contains explicit references to, and descriptions of, situations which may cause distress. This includes references to and descriptions of:

- Suicidal thoughts, intentions, and actions;
- Mention of rape, institutional violence, grooming, and rape culture;
- Psychotic delusions and hallucinations;
- Violent assault;
- Ableism, discrimination, and micro-aggressions; and
- Racial slurs.

Every effort has been made to provide more specific content warnings before relevant chapters, but please be aware that references to potentially distressing topics occur frequently and throughout the book. Please be advised before continuing. If you are looking for resources for queer and/or of-color sexual violence survivors please go to RAINN.org or changepapeculture.org.

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Preface

Sum to say

Kimiya

It has been nearly five years since changing rape culture changed MY life forever. It initially took me 730 days to accept my story and to be able to tell it—to relive, learn from, and stomach the awful truth that I discovered existed as a junior in college. With only the afro on my head and a bad-ass co-founder, we began Change Rape Culture. As it exists, as it perpetuates itself in society time and time again through acts of structural violence and the oppressive systems that uphold it.

If you have ever been cat-called, this is for you. If you have ever opened up to anyone, just for them to ask you if you're "sure", this is for you. If you have ever heard a rape joke that triggered you so bad you think you might have felt the earth shake, this is for you.

I'll keep going: If you ever had an idea that was "too big", a creepy family member that you always seemed to end up alone with, transphobic parents that refused to accept your identity, a job that silenced your calling out of its patriarchal system—this is for YOU.

DEEP FUCKING BREATH.

I need one. To remember the revelation of a lifetime to share with you all. It's time to fuck some shit up again. For the sake of history, for the sake of those silenced, for the survivors who have to see

their rapists on campus, at “family” holiday gatherings, and for the pain we try to wash off in the shower or a hot bath. By telling my story, I hope to provide strength and promise to the eyes that comb over this book. I hope that whoever comes across these words knows that there is someone out there fighting for you. Here goes nothing and something, all at the same time.

Taylor

No matter where you are in your journey with abuse (ally, survivor, still in an abusive relationship), #CRC is there to help. We meet survivors where systems refuse to go: wherever the survivor wants. There is a huge opportunity laid in front of public university students, staff, and faculty members to protect queer survivors of color from all violence(s) including sexual and intimate partner violence. There are opportunities for growth, connection, safety, transparency, and solidarity that empower everyone within the university. While doing this work first among collegiate queer and survivors of color I learned how desperate our work continues to be. We have a slogan: **For Survivors, By Survivors**, because at so many times the only people who are there to help you are other survivors. For the past five years I have had the privilege to watch our work expand past the university and go into homes, community centers, daycares, classrooms, Zoom rooms, bars, and offices across America. Sexual violence and rape culture does not only exist on our campuses—it’s in all aspects of our lives. While my first instance of having my voice elevated as a sexual violence survivor was in college, my first assault happened before I was in grade school. We hope you read this carefully. We hope you use this information carefully. And that you leave our book working to protect the unknown survivors all around you.

Learning objectives

1. Define rape culture and describe the obstacles queer and/or BIPOC (Black, indigenous, and people of color) **student** survivors face on and off campus.
2. Recognize the importance of queer and BIPOC storytelling in public university sexual violence and community accountability policy making.
3. Question how rape culture, patriarchy, and gender-based discrimination show up in one's own lived experiences.
4. Experiment with sharing (written, orally, etc.), holding, and investigating one's own experiences as well as other participants' experiences to create new ways of being.
5. Assemble resources for BIPOC and/or queer student survivors.

1

Rape culture at public universities

Rape culture: A society or environment whose prevailing attitudes have the effect of normalizing or trivializing sexual assault or abuse.

Title IX passing

In 1970 only 7 per cent of high-school athletes and 15 per cent of collegiate athletes were girls (Staurowsky et al., 2022). High-school-aged female-identified athletes faced mountains of obstacles compared with their male counterparts, including, but not limited to, raising their own money, funding their own trips, and facing discrimination from institutional representatives and male athletes. These issues were equally complicated for collegiate and professional women athletes. By 1972 women's rights in athletics was made into a federally recognized problem. In 1972 President Richard Nixon signed a federal law known as Title IX after representatives Patsy T. Mink, Edith Green, and Senator Burch Bai introduced it to integrate cisgender women into collegiate and professional sports and uphold women's rights (Winslow).

On the surface Title IX was the answer to integrating federal civil rights discrimination policies into higher education institutions. However, historians like Natalia Mehlman Petrzela insists in her CNN News mini documentary on Title IX that other lawmakers were not as excited for Title IX as they wanted the public to believe. She emphasizes that conservative lawmakers wanted to be able to say that federally funded institutions advocated for equality to continue receiving federal funds (CNN, 2022). However, the funds were not yet designated to be used explicitly to empower collegiate cisgender women athletes and instead were disproportionately used to discourage equal treatment of these athletes. Many lawmakers of the 1970s still held patriarchal sentiments about women in sports and held beliefs that women were physically and mentally unable to be equal to men in general, not to mention male athletes (CNN, 2022). Furthermore, from 1973 to 1977 there were zero women in Senate and between 16 and 19 women total in the House (Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey). This combination of small numbers of governmental representatives and an overrepresentation of representatives valuing patriarchal ideals (heteronormativity, strict gender roles, etc.) resulted in the suppression, devaluation, and finicky treatment of collegiate sexual violence policies, as further explained in Mehlman Petrzela's video (CNN, 2022). The University of Illinois Library details a definition of patriarchy through the lens of queer theory. They define patriarchy as a system of domination that prioritizes a male-dominated society (University of Illinois Library). We at #ChangeRapeCulture believe that lawmakers and university administrators alike simply wanted to support Title IX to pacify the feminist killjoys who insist that a

specific distinction be added for how federal funds can be used to protect and empower collegiate survivors.

Pushback

On February 17, 1976, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) filed a lawsuit challenging the legality of Title IX (Staurowsky et al., 2022). They claimed that no athletic programs received direct federal funds and thus shouldn't be forced to abide by Title IX regulations. Some even declared they would no longer accept public funds and petitioned privatized collegiate athletics teams. The suit was later dismissed in 1978 (Staurowsky et al., 2022). Later, in 1984 the Supreme Court case *Grove City College v. Bell* limited the scope of Title IX. Title IX only applied to specific programs that received federal funds (Staurowsky et al., 2022), and under this interpretation, the law did not necessarily cover athletics. This limitation came as a direct pushback to a Title IX policy interpretation done by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1979 through the Office of Civil Rights. The policy interpretation prohibited educational programs and institutions from being funded if they participated in sex-based discrimination.

The conditions from 1979 were:

1. Athletic financial assistance. Schools were required to award scholarship money to men and women proportional to participation rates.
2. Accommodation of athletic interests and abilities. Schools could satisfy the participation requirement in one of three ways, known as the three-prong test, the first of which was

by offering athletic participation numbers proportionate to enrollment.

3. Other areas, a laundry list including equipment, practice times, support services, etc.

Despite pushback, the idea that institution “x” received federal funding and would need to allocate funds specifically meant to eliminate sex-based discrimination was reinstated but only in collegiate sports programs. This specific placement for Title IX left every other aspect of collegiate life without allocated support to eliminate gender-based discrimination. Soon, Title IX began to function as a jumping point to discuss gender-based violence on and off campus, inside and outside the locker rooms, and in all departments of the institution.

Title IX over time

These discussions of gender-based discrimination included topics like, but not limited to, sexual violence, transgender rights, and abuse. As rape culture conversations continued to mold and change across public campuses in America, the center of Title IX’s focus has gone from integrating women into sports and sexual harassment in the 1970s (CNN, 2022); to adding sexual orientation and gender identities as protected classes in the mid 2010s (U.S. Department of Education, 2023); and dealing with violence between faculty, staff, and students (Know YourIX.org, n.d.). What was the responsibility of the institution to protect those that received harm while attending, working, or interacting with the institution? If a representative of the institution is perpetuating violence, what protocols does the institution take?

During the Trump administration in 2016, Title IX jurisdictions became constricted similarly to the way they were in the 1970s. The administration's additions added up to 2,033 pages (Bedera, 2020). The additions drastically reduced the types of sexual misconduct that universities were required to investigate. And when the investigation started survivors were required to be cross-examined with their perpetrator. If survivors did not wish to pursue an investigation, they could ask for an "informal resolution", which required participation from both parties and no punishments were allowed (Bedera, 2020). Instead of seeking justice, survivors were subjected to more paperwork. This restriction was only temporary, but it influenced waves of federally funded institutions to create extra barriers to reporting sexual violence for women and gender-variant people.

New rules, different problems

In 2021 the Biden administration signed an executive order to propose changes to Title IX and expand protections for trans and queer people. In 2023 with a pandemic, over 340+ bills directly discriminating against mainly trans people but also queer folks in America (Bathroom Bills, Drag Bans, Transgender Athletes, etc.) on the Senate floor, and rising discrimination offenses against LGBTQIA2S+ folks, Title IX restriction conversations have found new focus.

In 2023, the U.S. Department of Education released a fact sheet explaining their proposed changes to Title IX specifically around transgender and intersex student athletes. The Department discourages what they call "one-size-fits-all policies" that remove transgender students in public K-12 and collegiate schools

from all sports (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). They instead encourage schools to create well-rounded and specific policies that help students learn about “teamwork, leadership, and physical fitness”. Despite the positive goals of including gender-variant students in Title IX protections, public universities are determining the protections centered around the bodies, presentations, and attitudes of transgender students. In 2022, Outsports reporters Cyd Zeigler and Karleigh Webb wrote an article titled “These 36 trans athletes have competed openly in college”, to show that cyclical instances of outrage towards trans athletes will not stop them from competing in collegiate sports. They emphasize that trans students have competed and openly withstood public pushback within collegiate sports since 2010 and that “Outsports knows there are countless other trans athletes who have competed at the collegiate level who have not been publicly out or out to teammates”. They harp on transitioning being at the center of requirements for many college athletes, as the gender athletes transition to will be how they compete, not the sex they were assigned at birth (Zeigler and Webb, 2022). Ever since 2010 colleges have begun and continue to allow trans men and women to compete on their respective team or have non-gendered teams. Collegiate athletes are coming out as trans more and more each day but mainly because, unless a student comes out, they will not be able to compete on the team of their chosen gender (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). The first out trans man in the NCAA Division 1 was a Black man named Kye Allums who competed on the George Washington University’s basketball team (Zeigler & Webb, 2022). He notably came out prior to NCAA’s trans athlete announcement in 2011. NCAA Division 2 athletes like track and field athlete CeCé Telfer

and fencer Bobbie Fischer competed on athletic teams before, during, and after transitioning genders (Ziegler & Webb, 2022).

Title IX and student eligibility

The question of allowing transgender athletes to participate in sports, from elementary school to professional sports, continues to be a huge topic of conversation globally. In America the specific addition to Title IX that includes transgender students is in Section 106.41(b)(2):

If a recipient adopts or applies sex-related criteria that would limit or deny a student's eligibility to participate on a male or female team consistent with their gender identity, such criteria must, for each sport, level of competition, and grade or education level: (i) be substantially related to the achievement of an important educational objective, and (ii) minimize harms to students whose opportunity to participate on a male or female team consistent with their gender identity would be limited or denied.

So, if a student identifies as man or woman and meets these criteria they can play? Even though the discretion is still left to school officials to make the final call (KnowYourIX.org). Once again, gender-expansive student athletes who identify as man or woman have certain protections, but how does this work for non-binary and intersex athletes? What about non-athletes' protections?

Despite the 2016 withdrawal of the Department of Education's clarification of queer and trans student survivors' rights by the

Trump administration, queer and transgender students are legally protected by Title IX. This means that transgender students' access to education, dress codes, pronouns, and single-gendered facilities like restrooms are protected (KnowYourIX.org, n.d.). They are also protected from harassment, bullying, discrimination, and sexual violence. However, as society perpetuates rape culture and public institutions mimic society at large, rape, abuse, and domestic violence survivors of color become a consequence, an afterthought, an obstacle to the institution when reporting with Title IX coordinators or mandated reporters (KnowYourIX.org, n.d.).

Obstacles reporting to Title IX

Racialized and queer student survivors face intersectional obstacles when reporting. For starters, 70 per cent of college students (regardless of gender) say they have been sexually coerced (Blackburn Center). Of all those cases, more than two-thirds of them will never report their assault to city or university police (RAINN). According to RAINN, for every 1,000 cases, 975 perpetrators will walk free. The respondents detailed to RAINN researchers fear of retaliation, belief that the police would/could not do anything to help, belief that the assault was a personal matter, reporting to a different official, belief that their assault was not important enough to report, not wanting to get the perpetrator in trouble, and other reasons as barriers to reporting.

Another barrier is that most institutions do not adopt survivor-centered models and instead prioritize the safety of the accused **over** the safety of the student body. For example, according to Title IX policy, if a student is assaulted by another student in an off-campus apartment this report is relegated to the local

police department. If the victim does not wish to pursue legal action but does wish to pursue reporting the assault to the Title IX office, few things can be done to protect the survivor. With no proof of an assault having taken place through the police, the university isn't allowed to discipline the alleged assailant (Bedera, 2020). The assailant is allowed to remain on campus to assault again and again while their survivor now has the burden to prove an assault occurred in the first place (Bedera, 2020). Policies that require survivors to present a burden of proof via a police report, rape kit results, or retelling their attacks over and over work to directly dissuade folks from reporting (RAINN). One strategy that our co-founders have personal experience of is cross-examination of survivor stories while their abuser and a team of coaches is present. The purpose of this is to encourage the survivor not to take legal action and instead leave it up to their coaches to administer punishment. This is done for a myriad of reasons, such as keeping funding and funders, keeping key players for athletic prowess, and institutions not wanting to recognize that they employ or promote those accused of harm. Presidential administrations, lobbyists, justice systems, and politicians assist in perpetuating rape culture by relegating the responsibility for justice on to the survivor. Institutions relegate much of the legal burden to not only the survivors themselves, but also local community-run survivor advocacy organizations or school police forces. #ChangeRapeCulture often intervenes to train university officials, police officers, and mental health professionals in survivor-centered models and harm reduction; offer mental health support groups where university mental health resources alienate or further victimize survivors; and collect resources to amplify survivor stories when university

officials or lawyers threaten students from speaking out. There was a specific case where a survivor was interviewed by university police with no scheduled follow-up with a licensed mental health professional, which caused them to have a public mental breakdown, resulting in them attempting suicide while on campus in front of others. Bullying from other classmates and threats from their abuser ramped up after this attempt, leading to them dropping out of school. Students report there are no ways to keep them safe other than personal police escort or telling the accused to move around their schedule to avoid seeing one another. Students who are queer, of color, housing insecure, or facing hunger are at higher risk of not reporting and continuing to attend school with their abusers. Institutions protect abusers.

Institutions protect abusers

When institutions refuse to expand their definitions and policies of sex and gender-based violence they send students a specific message: **Don't bother reporting**. Queer and BIPOC students face intersectional obstacles when they report (Kosciw et al., 2022). Queer students do not report due to embarrassment, believing no action would be taken against the perpetrators while simultaneously facing a higher prevalence and underreports of sexual violence incidents. Queer students of color are at higher risk of experiencing violence due to racism and are also less likely to report their assaults (Kosciw et al., 2022). Public universities fail to adopt survivor-centered models for all aspects of collegiate life including Title IX offices. A survivor-centered approach seeks **only** to empower survivors by prioritizing their rights, safety, well-being, needs, and wishes (UN Women, 2011). Organizations that

wish to adopt this model must provide appropriate, accessible, and quality services to survivors. However, most universities protect abusers and prioritize the safety of the accused **over** the safety of the student body. Whether it may be to keep funding, to trick community members into a false sense of safety, or just not caring—the negligence is clear. Universities relegate much of the legal brunt to local community-run survivor advocacy organizations or school police forces. They sidestep responsibility for disciplining the accused by claiming not to be able to get involved. Title IX offices offer student survivors a myriad of distancing tactics, none of which result in disciplinary action taken against the accused. The best prevention tactics that universities and university police stations offer are typically things like a personal police escort, or changing the accused’s schedule to avoid making contact; and that’s after they run their own investigation and determine whether the concern is valid. These methods further the stereotypes that undermine and question survivor stories and perpetuate rape culture. Students who are queer, of color, housing insecure, differently abled, or facing hunger are at higher risk of not reporting and continuing to attend school with their abusers because once again the messaging is clear—**institutions protect abusers**.

One of our survivors detailed an instance where they saw the Chief of Police comforting their abuser. This was days after #CRC co-founders had acted as mediators between the office of the Chief of Police and student advocates on campus where the Chief of Police met with and discussed the specifics of this relationship with the survivor themselves. The Chief made a promise to keep this student safe from their abuser, specifically citing “having Black

daughters”, only to never follow up with the survivor and meet with the accused several times after the mediation. This abuser then began to stalk their survivor, gaslight them out of speaking out, and called them over 250 times. When this survivor went to follow up with the Chief about the case, they were informed that, because they were a man and the abuser was a woman, “a stern talking to” was all that was needed. With both of these folks being a part of the queer community, the survivor decided to cut everyone at school off and operate in almost complete solitude.

Exercise 1.1: It happens more than you think—script

Objectives: This script should be used as a catalyst in discussions about rape culture on campus, in community, and the world abroad.

Warning: While this script is based on real events, certain discussions may relate to the audience’s personal experiences. It is imperative that if a mandated reporter will be present at the conversation, this should be related to all members of the discussion. These conversations should not center alleged perpetrators or be used to intimidate survivors. Like #CRC’s experience with hosting a conversation similar to this—it may be best to talk off campus. Prioritize the safety of survivors before discussing the topics brought up in this script. Invite local survivor advocacy groups to offer counselors, advocates, or educators to sit in and help guide this conversation.

Instructions:

1. Establish “Shared Agreements” before assigning roles or reading individually. Establish conversation boundaries, discuss Title IX mandatory transparency, and find ways to respect one another’s experiences.
2. Next, offer a myriad of participation methods within the discussion. Due to the triggering subject matter some may choose to participate in silence, virtually, in person, in writing, or not at all. If they ask to leave class please allow them to.
3. Develop a way to read the script. This can be done as a group or individually. Encourage students to process the subject matter in a way that empowers their safety. Inspire them to read in groups, using headphones, walking around, knitting, coloring, etc.
4. After reading the script or during the script prompt questions about the societal prevailing attitudes of normalizing or trivializing sexual assault or abuse.

Trigger Warning: Sexual abuse, rape, institutional violence, and grooming.

Student 1: Thank you all for reading our Snap messages and our in-person flyers. A few of us have been hearing more and more about repeatedly dealing with their abusers on campus so it was about time we actually talk about it.

Student 2: I won't lie—my abuser is actively trying to get me kicked out so I fully believed this was something he was doing to trick me. So happy I saw you at the door when I walked up.

Student 1: Kicked out? Can I ask you how that is possible?

Student 2: Well, since I was assaulted off campus and didn't go to the police I can be sued for defamation. My abuser's aunt is a lawyer and he keeps sending me threatening messages about telling my parents we f*cked.

Student 3: And HE is trying to get YOU kicked out? Is the school doing anything?

Student 2: Well, I went to the Title IX office but they told me I didn't go to the cops so it's he say she say. The best they can do is ask him to leave me alone. I can't get our class schedules changed without "evidence" of the assault. I don't mess with cops so I just gave up trying to do anything.

Student 4: See, as a gay man I see all these abusers abuse women and then leave the dorms and come f*ck with us on the down low. Most of these people are also hiding their sexuality and that adds into how messed up this all is. My abuser is a soccer player and I heard the girls who tell the coaches first end up getting roasted in this weird coach panel.

Student 5: OH MY GOD THAT HAPPENED TO ME! I got assaulted by a football player and when I told the coach he acted like he believed me and

wanted to punish him. He told me to tell him what happened in the coach's meeting room but when I got there the entire coach team was there—plus my abuser. They grilled me about what I wore, who my family is, and whether or not I actually wanted to have sex. They told me they would deal with it. I don't see him as much but he's still on the team.

Student 1: My straight guy friend has been getting verbally and sexually assaulted by this sorority girl we know. He went to the Greek office and was laughed out. Then he spoke to the Police Chief who lied about taking a statement from him. Last week she went to his on-campus job to try and convince him to stop telling officials on campus about her and he ended up having a panic attack in the quad. It sucks because everyone basically tells him to hit her back or man up.

Student 4: See, and if it was two Black men they still wouldn't care. When do they care about rape and abuse victims? If the white girls are getting cease and desist letters the Black and Brown students don't stand a chance!

Student 3: I mean, my Mexican girlfriend was just passed a Scantron by her abuser in class.

Student 2: Wait, what?

Student 3: She didn't think anyone would believe her because she's trans so she just didn't tell anybody. He sits right behind her in every class.

Student 5: Well, what are we going to do? Just keep letting this happen? Keep sweeping it under the rug? Keep allowing the survivors to be burdened with all the shame and hard work?

Student 1: We've been talking to some lawyers we know to see what rights we have. Which, because of America, are pretty few. Unless someone has been convicted of a crime we have to say "alleged" if we share our stories publicly. If we outrightly accuse our abusers we are liable to be sued for libel or defamation. Nothing is stopping us from posting their names next to the word alleged.

Student 2: I want to help but I can't participate with my abuser already on my tail.

Student 4: What do y'all need? I'm there!

Student 3: Ditto! Call me, beep me!

Student 5: I'm tired of feeling like I did something wrong. Let me know the time and place!

Exercise 1.2: It happens more than you think—large discussion debrief

Objectives: This discussion debrief should be used as a pair in discussions about rape culture on campus, in community, and the world abroad.

Warning: While this script is based on real events, certain discussions may relate to the audience's personal experiences.

It is imperative that if a mandated reporter will be present at the conversation, this should be related to all members of the discussion. These conversations should not center alleged perpetrators or be used to intimidate survivors. Like #CRC's experience with hosting a conversation similar to this—it may be best to talk off campus. Prioritize the safety of survivors before discussing the topics brought up in this script. Invite local survivor advocacy groups to offer counselors, advocates, or educators to sit in and help guide this conversation.

Instructions:

1. Use the “Shared Agreements” created for the script and adjust them for a group or online discussion(s).
2. Next, offer a myriad of participation methods within the discussion. Due to the triggering subject matter some may choose to participate in silence, virtually, in person, in writing, or not at all. If they ask to leave class please allow them to.
3. Prompt listed and unlisted questions about the societal prevailing attitudes of normalizing or trivializing sexual assault or abuse.

Trigger Warning: Sexual abuse, rape, institutional violence, and grooming.

Prompted questions:

1. What are some examples of the university perpetuating, normalizing, or trivializing sexual violence, assault, and abuse?
2. What intersectional obstacles did the queer students express facing?
3. Do you think every resolution the institution enacted follows Title IX regulations? Why or why not?
4. What on-campus resources would you recommend to these students? Off-campus?
5. How do you think the university could better assist these students? How do you think their city or community could better assist students?

2

Living histories

The beginning of #CRC

My jaw clenched and palms sweated as I covered the protests that I was assigned to cover as the assistant news editor for my school newspaper. Brett Kavanaugh had just been appointed to the Supreme Court and the nation was raging with protests after Christine Blasey Ford came forward about being sexually assaulted by the Supreme-Court-Justice-to-be. On my college campus pro-Kavanaugh and anti-Kavanaugh protests were held, arguing the guilt and innocence of this man. Covering these protests as a journalist meant that I had to only take quotes from students and refrain from inputting any opinion for the sake of journalistic bias—writing news during this time was one of the most challenging commitments I had ever made.

On the day that I covered the pro-Kavanaugh protests, I watched frat boys holding signs with rape jokes on them. Cheeks pink from screaming, proudly wearing the letters of their fraternities. I finally stomached the nerve to walk up to one, needing a single quote for the story I was writing.

He proudly spoke into my recording device, “I mean, who cares? It was years ago, she has no proof, and he has earned his nomination. Everyone is overreacting, she’s probably lying

anyway". My spirit felt like it sank into the ground as I glanced a distance away and spotted one of my classmates wiping giant tears from her cheeks. I walked over to her and whispered in her ear not to cry—that I had a plan.

Two weeks before, I sat across from Taylor Waits on her bedroom floor. We both held cups of Minute Maid juice as we exchanged stories of rape, sexual assault, and abuse that we had heard on campus. At the time, Taylor Waits was the university's annual "Ms", and also a student leader like me. We had access to several testimonies, seeing as we both were very involved in the university's extracurricular community. It was the brutal rape of our mutual friend that lit the fucking flame—Taylor pushed her glasses back onto the middle of her nose as she asked me, "So we're going to do this?"

I didn't know what I was even going to eat for lunch the next day in between classes, but I knew that I was ready to dismantle the patriarchy. Even if it meant that it would cost me and my future everything.

On November 15, 2018, Taylor and I held a meeting titled "It Happens More Than You Think: Let's Talk About It". We relied on word-of-mouth throughout the day in hopes that survivors on campus would come and share the space with us. Our jaws nearly dropped as more people than seats we had available showed up, all with the same fire in their eyes. We opened up the floor and testimony after testimony poured out from each attendee. Soon enough, people at the meeting turned out to have the same rapist in common—presidents of student organizations, star athletes, and professors. I was shaking with rage and we all soon enough were empowered to do SOMETHING, after coming