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MORE

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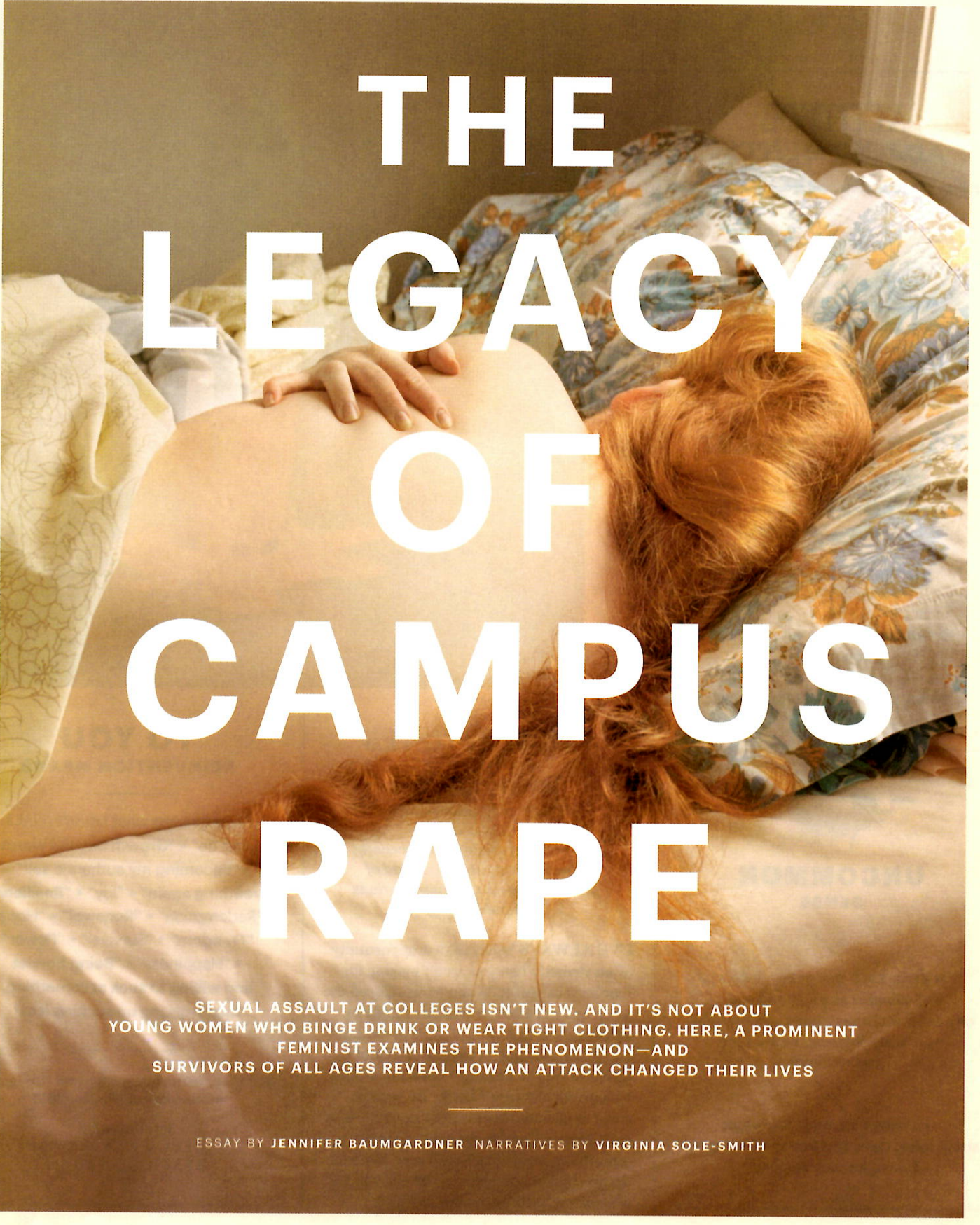
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THE LEGACY OF CAMPUS RAPE

SEXUAL ASSAULT AT COLLEGES ISN'T NEW, AND IT'S NOT ABOUT
YOUNG WOMEN WHO BINGE DRINK OR WEAR TIGHT CLOTHING. HERE, A PROMINENT
FEMINIST EXAMINES THE PHENOMENON—AND
SURVIVORS OF ALL AGES REVEAL HOW AN ATTACK CHANGED THEIR LIVES

ESSAY BY JENNIFER BAUMGARDNER NARRATIVES BY VIRGINIA SOLE-SMITH

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOCELYN LEE



JULIETTE GRIMMETT, 38

"I NEVER THOUGHT THIS COULD HAPPEN TO ME."

"FOR YEARS, going to the gynecologist was awful," says Grimmert. "It didn't matter how nice they were or how quick—I did not want them to touch me." It brought her back to the night in 1995, her freshman year at Skidmore College, when she was sexually assaulted by a classmate in her dorm room after an evening of hanging out with friends. "I said every version of no, please stop. It went on for over an hour."

Afterward, Grimmert didn't know where to turn or how to report the assault. "I'd always thought of myself as having a powerful voice," she says now. "Suddenly, I didn't want to tell anyone what had happened to me." When she did speak out, the college arranged an administrative hearing. The perpetrator claimed the sexual contact

was consensual, and the school found him responsible not for rape but for violating the honor code. His penalty was one year of social probation. "He could still go to class, play sports, live in the dorm and walk by me in the hall," Grimmert says. "The rape itself was horrific. But being treated like I didn't matter by this institution—that's what I still struggle to make peace with day to day."

That effort is what inspires Grimmert's work. She now lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, and trains universities in how to respond to campus rape. And her sons, ages five and two, gave Grimmert another way to fight back. "What greater social justice can I do to prevent violence," she says, "than to raise two loving boys?"

M

Y OLDER SISTER

was raped at a high school party, the first time she tried alcohol. She drank too much too quickly, felt woozy and went into a bedroom to lie down. A guy she knew followed her in and proceeded to have sex with her. She was 14, and a virgin.

Although it made no logical sense, overnight her reputation went from painfully shy, viola-playing, straight-A student to wanton slut. Other girls shunned her and wrote epithets on her locker; boys preyed on her. At parties, guys would push her into bedrooms or put their hands up her shirt as she walked by. Virtually no one stood up for her or questioned why what happened should be seen as her fault. No one used the word *rape*. As she described it to me many years later, being assaulted was horrible, but the aftermath—the scapegoating, the shunning, the “slutting”—was worse.

It wasn't until we went to college, in the late '80s and early '90s, that my sister and I began to make sense of her experience. We suddenly had access to feminism in the form of women's studies classes, books like Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will*, Take Back the Night marches and rape hotlines. Crucially, we were surrounded by women who had been raped and who shared their stories.

Things were better than they'd been pre-1980s, when date rape hadn't even become a term, much less declared an injustice—when you could be gang-raped on campus and not a single college official was willing to hear about it. Or when you could report being raped by a man in a ski mask in your dorm bathroom and the police officer would ask why you were showering at night. Still, the situation was absurdly bad. In 1988, my freshman year at college, one of my friends was raped at a party and became pregnant; she dropped out, had the baby and changed schools, keeping mum about the whole experience for many years. Two women in my dorm were raped by the same international student. At another party, a woman I knew was trapped in a bathroom by her “friend” and not allowed out until she gave him a blow job.

I was aflame (in my crazy, conflicted, college-feminist way) with an urgent need to change things. I fought with the philosophy majors at frat parties about their claim that rape was “natural.” I scheduled meetings with deans where I angrily accused them of not caring about student safety and covering up the “real” rape statistics at my college, Lawrence University, in Appleton,

Wisconsin. The Clery Act of 1990 mandated that schools publish their crime statistics, but sexual assaults reported by Lawrence amounted to just two or three; meanwhile, I alone had heard of dozens. Inspired by students at Brown University, my friends and I anonymously published a “castration list”—the names of male students who had raped women we knew—and hung it in the bathroom in the student union. In the end, we didn't change much, but protesting the injustice and expressing rage felt good, felt important.

In the years since I finished college, productions of *The Vagina Monologues* and the movement it inspired, V-Day, have raised more than \$100 million in funds (and untold amounts of consciousness), and chapters of SAFER (Students Active for Ending Rape) have empowered students to understand and reform sexual assault policies on more than 40 campuses. Student organizers and feminist professors have laid the groundwork for what is happening right now: the most intense scrutiny of sexual assault and campus life since 1985, when *Ms.* magazine published the first national study of campus rape. That study popularized the terms *acquaintance rape* and *date rape* as well as the statistic (derived from the study) that one in four women is the victim of rape or attempted rape.

Most of the new energy stems from Title IX, the 1972 law that says no school shall discriminate on the basis of sex. The National Collegiate Athletic Association was the first entity to fight for an exception from Title IX, cementing the sports element of the law in the public consciousness, but the amendment covers all aspects of education. A school cannot condone an environment that is hostile to women—and doing nothing about campus-rape culture is certainly hostile.

Still, it wasn't until 2010, when Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity brothers at Yale University stood outside the freshman women's dorms and chanted “No means yes; yes means anal!” that the protections of Title IX were brought to bear on campus rape. In 2011, Diane Rosenfeld, who is now a lecturer and the director of the Gender Violence Program at Harvard Law School, represented 16 current and former students from Yale in a Title IX complaint against the school. The legal action ended with an agreement that Yale would overhaul the way it deals with complaints of sexual misconduct. “Schools used to be worried they'd be sued by a guy accused of rape; now they are actually concerned about victims,” Rosenfeld says. “They rightfully want to avoid a civil rights investigation which could result in the school losing federal funding.”

Then, on January 22, 2014, President Obama announced the establishment of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, which, among other advances, supplies technical and policy support to student

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Women of college age are four times as likely to be sexually assaulted as any other age group. Raise your voice and:

EDUCATE Take the pledge and join the White House's “It's on Us” campaign to raise awareness of campus rape at itsonus.org.

ACTIVATE Support student activism and learn to mobilize a campus at cultureofrespect.org.

LEGISLATE Tell Congress members that you want them to vote for the Campus Accountability and Safety Act, which will require colleges to designate confidential advisers to help rape victims and stiffen the penalties for Title IX violations. —v.s.s.

PROTECT YOUR DAUGHTERS, PROTECT YOURSELF

Ending campus rape means changing our thinking, our laws and our culture of violence.

While we're working toward that future, we want our daughters to be able to call for help during an assault if at all possible. Some of these apps could even be downloaded mid-party:

ONWATCH Lets the user call friends or 911 with two taps. She can set a timer if she's in a vulnerable situation; if she doesn't enter her code when the timer goes off, the app alerts the cops (\$9.99 a year; on watchoncampus.com).

CIRCLE OF 6 Lets the user easily contact friends for a ride, to check in or to signal an emergency (free; circleof6app.com).

SAFETREK Hold down the "safe button" on the phone; when the button is released, the app dials the police. Cancel the alert with a four-digit PIN (\$1.99; safetrekapp.com).

MY FORCE One tap sends the phone's GPS coordinates to a 24/7 live team that contacts authorities (\$99 per year with code MYFORCE99; myforce.com). —v.s.s.

must respect the rights of a student after she has reported an assault, including not retraumatizing her with a bumbling or discouraging response. Legally, a student who has been raped is entitled to report it to the police. She also has the right *not* to report it to the police. Whether or not she makes a report, she is entitled to accommodations so that she and the accused are no longer in class or in a living situation together. Finally, the campus judiciary **CONTINUED ON PAGE 134**

activists. It was the first time a sitting president used his bully pulpit to decry campus rape. And in September, Obama launched "It's on Us," an awareness campaign that asks men and women to make a personal commitment to end campus sexual assault.

Today there is an unprecedented convergence of presidential attention, government pressure and student activism. Women have tweeted and Facebooked their attackers' names, described their experiences in open letters that have gone viral and created websites to chronicle horror stories of enduring the campus judicial process (see @RapedAtTufts). Thanks to social media, antirape activists have historic levels of visibility, and at this writing, 90 schools are being investigated for Title IX noncompliance.

Are schools the best place to seek justice in these cases? Rape is a felony, so one might think a victim would be best served by reporting it to local police rather than to a dean. "But when I went with students to the district attorney, prosecutors wouldn't take the cases," says Susan Marine, who was the founding director of Harvard's Office of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response. "People say that colleges should get out of the business of adjudicating rape, but in many cases, especially cases of acquaintance rape, the student judicial process is a victim's only chance for justice."

Of the rapes that are reported to law enforcement, only 7 to 27 percent are ever prosecuted, according to an in-depth analysis by End Violence Against Women International. Rapes that don't fit what the study authors call "the cultural stereotype of 'real rape'" (which they define as rape by a stranger, involving a weapon and physical injury to the victim) are particularly unlikely to result in arrest. And attacks on college students often don't fit that stereotype. A student may have been drinking, she is likely to have been raped by someone she knows, and she may have had some degree of consensual sexual contact with her rapist.

Schools are obligated to enforce the civil rights provisions of Title IX, which guarantee an education in an environment that is not sexually hostile, and they can impose a range of sanctions on a student found responsible for sexual misconduct: They can expel that student, suspend him, move him to another dormitory or change his classes. Schools also

YOU CAN REPORT A RAPE EVEN DECADES LATER

Only 12 percent of college-age victims ever report their assault to the police, according to the Department of Justice. If you or someone you know was raped on campus years ago, you may think there's nothing you can do now. But that's not true. "There are many important reasons to report a rape, no matter when it happened," says Katie Koestner, executive director of Take Back the Night (TBTN). She notes that the average rapist will assault 12 to 17 women before going to prison. "There may be a whole trail of victims after you," she says. "Notifying the authorities can help make a conviction in those cases even if the statute of limitations is up on yours." Reporting your rape now can also provide a powerful sense of closure. Several women contacted by *More* for this story decided to report campus rapes that had happened decades earlier. Here's how to do it:

FIND THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS IN THE STATE WHERE THE ATTACK OCCURRED by visiting rainn.org/public-policy/laws-in-your-state. Criminal prosecution may still be possible, especially if the attack occurred before you turned 16.

REPORT TO THE CRIMINAL SYSTEM. Even if the criminal statute of limitations has expired, contact the police department in the town where the rape occurred and ask to speak to the special-victims unit or the officer who handles "sensitive crimes." He or she will walk you through the reporting process. If your rapist has moved away, you can also report the crime to the police department in the town where he lives now. "They won't be able to prosecute, since the attack happened out of their district, but if he rapes again, they'll have your story on file," Koestner says.

REPORT TO THE CIVIL SYSTEM. If you no longer are able to pursue criminal charges, you may still be able to sue for damages in civil court. TBTN offers free legal advice to survivors; click on "Request Legal Assistance" at takebackthenight.org/get-help/ to get a response within 24 hours.

REPORT TO YOUR CAMPUS. "Schools need to know this has been happening for a long time," Koestner says. "Many colleges don't recognize the statute of limitations—so if he's employed by the school or in any way affiliated as an alum, they can still hold a hearing." Your report will have more weight if it comes with a lawyer attached; the TBTN legal team can guide you through this process as well. —v.s.s. >>



JENNIFER DICKERSON, 35

“TIME. THAT’S THE ONLY THING THAT MAKES IT BETTER.”

“**EVEN** now, 17 years later, when my kids hug me, there’s a second where I have to fight off panic,” says Dickerson. “Because he choked me while he raped me. For three hours.”

The assault happened in 1998, during Dickerson’s sophomore year at Southwest Texas University; a male friend attacked her in his dorm room after a night of watching baseball and eating pizza. She told a campus police officer the next day but didn’t officially report the rape to her college. “I was terrified in case they ruled against me, because I had to see him in class,” she says. By the time she decided to go on the record, the student had withdrawn from school. “I never saw him again, but I’ve needed drugs to function ever since,” says Dickerson, who suffers

from chronic anxiety. “I don’t trust anybody. I was raped by someone I knew—but that just made me more scared of people I don’t know.”

For years, that meant grocery shopping at 2 AM to avoid crowds and only going to restaurants where she could sit with her back against the wall. Dickerson also got involved in an abusive relationship soon after the rape; it was three years before she felt able to leave. “It was easy for him to control me, because I already felt like I wasn’t worth anything,” she recalls. Today she is living in Colorado Springs, happily married with three children, and still trying to come to grips with her fear. “It’s a work in progress,” she says. “My life is completely different. But I can’t let what happened control me. I know now that I deserve to be happy.”



LORETTA ROSS, 61

"I VISITED MY TRAUMA ON MY BODY. IT WAS SUICIDE THROUGH CIGARETTES AND FOOD."

ROSS was raped three times before she turned 17; the attacks included incest that resulted in the birth of her son when she was just 15 and a gang rape that she says occurred in an off-campus apartment during her freshman year at Howard University. Ross never knew the names of her assailants. "I was so afraid of men," she says. "For a long time, I even thought I was becoming a lesbian. I did not want to be heterosexual."

For years she didn't speak out about any of the attacks, including the one near Howard. "This was 1970; it didn't seem to me that there was any way to report it or to hold these people accountable," she says. "It never occurred to me to call the police because I assumed I would be blamed for going to the party." She eventually started using

drugs, relying on them to block out the trauma. Then, in 1979, she became the director of one of the country's first rape crisis centers—and found herself unable to work the call-in hotline because she had not yet dealt with her own past. A colleague helped her find a therapist, and Ross quit using drugs. "I've been clean and sober since 1982," she says. "But I don't ever feel like I've healed."

Ross, who now lives in Atlanta, has dedicated her career to reproductive justice and human rights; in 2004, she served as codirector of the March for Women's Lives, one of the largest protest marches in U.S. history. "That rape crisis center is where I became a feminist," Ross says. "Turning pain into activism should happen more often."



DONNA L. POTTS, 52

"I WORRY ABOUT MY DAUGHTER. I DON'T WANT ANYONE TO PREY ON HER. SHE'S A LOT LIKE ME."

AN ENGLISH professor in Pullman, Washington, Potts engages her students by moving around the room as she teaches. But she's had to force herself to do that; for almost 20 years, she hid behind her lectern in every class. "I needed to conceal my body to feel safe," she says. Potts developed that protective instinct soon after she was raped in 1981, during her first year at the University of Missouri, by one of her professors. "My father had just committed suicide, and the professor invited me over, ostensibly to console me," she recalls. "The last thing he did before he raped me was to show me his daughter's room." The professor warned Potts not to tell anyone, but she says she disclosed the attack to a university psychiatrist. "His only reaction was, 'Well,

I bet a lot of men are attracted to you.' No one suggested that it was a crime. I struggled to even use the word *rape* for a long time."

Potts battled depression off and on for 30 years until she joined Pandora's Aquarium, an online support group. "My mother never accepted what happened; my oldest friend didn't believe me," says Potts. "I didn't have anyone to talk to who understood until I found other survivors." Now she pays it forward, serving as a moderator on the site and teaching courses on trauma in literature. "I spoke with a student who was raped on our campus recently, and she told me I was the first survivor she's ever met," Potts says. "In some ways, not nearly enough about rape culture has changed."



KATIE KOESTNER, 42

"I'M NOT EMBARRASSED. DON'T TREAT ME SENSITIVELY. HE WAS WRONG."

KOESTNER was attacked in 1990, after a dinner date during her freshman year at the College of William & Mary. "I was raised with conservative Christian values about waiting until marriage," she says. "I was a virgin and suddenly I wasn't a virgin anymore—and it happened without my consent, with me pushed up against a cinder block wall."

Koestner reported the attack to the dean's office and the campus police. The district attorney never pressed charges, but the university held a hearing; it found the accused guilty of sexual assault and banned him from her dormitory for the rest of the semester. He wrote a letter to the school newspaper claiming he'd been "wrongly branded as a date rapist" and the sex was consensual, and many students rallied

around him. "I was the subject of a 2,000-person petition saying I lied," Koestner recalls. "I was ostracized, my car was vandalized, but all of that made me strong and fearless. So it is what it is."

Koestner dropped her studies in chemical engineering for a women's studies—public policy double major and threw herself into antirape activism; she is now executive director of Take Back the Night. "I had to rethink everything I was ever told I had to do to get life right. Because now I knew what it was like to not have any power," says Koestner, who lives in Pennsylvania. "It took a long time for me to trust anyone." Today she thanks her husband for helping her readjust her view of the world. "Now," she says, "I believe that everyone is capable of change."