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Culture Shock

Hannah M. Frantz
Gettysburg College

Stephanie K. Adamczak
Gettysburg College

Elizabeth A. Rupert
Gettysburg College

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Culture Shock

Abstract

Take one week living in our culture:

Monday: A student quotes other students on Overheard at Gettysburg.

“In the commons at 8:50am. Two girls. Completely serious.

Girl 1: Have you been outside? Girl 2: Yea! It’s rape weather. Girl 1: I know. A girl could totally get raped out there.” [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, college culture, rape culture

Disciplines

Community-Based Research | Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Gender and Sexuality | Sociology | Women's Studies

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](http://www.gettysburg.edu) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

CULTURE SHOCK

March 6, 2013

Take one week living in our culture:

Monday: A student quotes other students on Overheard at Gettysburg.

“In the commons at 8:50am. Two girls. Completely serious.

Girl 1: Have you been outside?

Girl 2: Yea! It’s rape weather.

Girl 1: I know. A girl could totally get raped out there.”

Tuesday: A Gettysburg College student reads an academic article about timber companies “raping” Northwestern forests, using the word “rape” as a metaphor for forest destruction.

Wednesday: A high school student on campus refers to an exam “raping” him earlier in the week.

Thursday: In Steubenville, Ohio, members of a high school football team are involved in a sexual assault case, but have managed to escape punishment because of their involvement with a successful sports team in a small town – despite [much evidence](#) indicating their participation in and knowledge of the assault.

Friday: Two girls with beautiful voices perform an adorable and witty duet at an open mic night that includes the line “Sure as the stars above I’d really like to rape you,” a lyric that isn’t a part of the original song.

Saturday: The nation mourns the death of Lennay Kekua, Notre Dame’s football star Manti Te’o’s fictitious girlfriend. At the same time, Lizzy Seeberg commits suicide after [accusing a Notre Dame football player of sexual assault](#) and being harassed to recant her statement. Her report goes unnoticed and her life uncelebrated.

Sunday: While watching the Super Bowl, someone explains to me that “most likely all NFL stars have raped or murdered someone, but we have to root for someone anyway”.

This is our culture, and it’s called **rape culture**.



Definition: *a culture in which rape, and other forms of sexual assault, are prevalent in various practices and attitudes, and the media and other forces tend to normalize, tolerate, or condone rape.*

Sure, we can define rape culture, but that means very little out of context. In order to fully understand it, we need to see how it fits into our day-to-day lives. Let's consider that. Would you consider it rape culture when an RA tells her residents to remove their lanyards during freshmen orientation because they will be targeted at parties for sexual assault if they wear them? Is it rape culture when these very same freshmen girls are told during orientation not to wear revealing clothing to fraternities because they are making themselves vulnerable, especially in situations where alcohol is present? Or how about when upperclassmen refer to "The Red Zone," as the first half of fall semester when first-years are at their most vulnerable for sexual assault? Is it rape culture when women on Gettysburg's campus are afraid to walk across campus alone at night for fear that they will be assaulted?

In our culture, it is socially acceptable to laugh at someone's use of the word "rape" in a joke. How often have you heard someone say, "Man, that exam just raped me" or, "I'm going to beat you so badly in this game that I'm going to make you my bitch"? Why is it funny to joke about rape? It shouldn't be. [Not when one person every two minutes](#) is sexually assaulted in the U.S. Our laughter is just another example of rape culture. Perpetrators of sexual assault (both past and future) are emboldened by this laughter. And victims are shamed, revisiting the worst experience of their life because of a joke laughed at by their friends.

It is rape culture when victims who were sexually assaulted while wearing revealing clothing are told that they were "asking for it." It is rape culture when rape is used as a tool worldwide in war and genocide. It is rape culture when men and women alike modify their daily behavior to conform to social norms or to protect themselves from assault. It is rape culture when over half of the sexual assaults that occur are **not** reported to the police.

This is rape culture. And it's rampant. It's in our schools, our homes, and deeply integrated into our society. It is our *culture*.

So where do we go from here?

Hannah Frantz '13
Staff Writer

Stephanie Adamczak '15
Contributing Writer

Elle Rupert '13
Blog Manager

<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2013/03/06/culture-shock/>