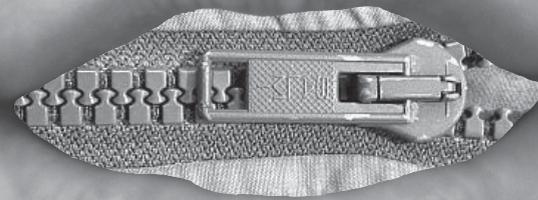


OPINIONS

THE ELEPHANT



Out of every 1,000 rapes,
only 334 are reported.

*According to Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN).

photo by **Adaline Bray**

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IN THE ROOM

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editor-in-chief

In the United States, there were 284,350 sexual assaults in 2014, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. If you do the math, that means one person is sexually assaulted every two minutes. These assaults often go un-reported. We at TKC felt this issue needed to be addressed because of its prevalence in society and the direct effect this issue has - and may have in the future - on people at KHS.

Being a girl:

I love being a girl. I love everything about being a girl. I love dressing up. I love being able to embrace my femininity.

I hate how unsafe I can feel for the sole reason of being female. I hate that when I walk alone down a street, or through my parking garage at night, I walk with 911 ready to dial, my keys clenched between my knuckles and my pepper spray unlocked. I hate that I have a 1 in 6 chance of being sexually assaulted in my lifetime, according to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN).

Our culture, though slowly improving, tends to blame the victim. We like to say things like *She obviously drank too much*, *Her boobs were out way too much* or *Isn't she kind of easy?* all seeming to hint at *She was asking for it*. We're dismissive about sexual assault because if we can blame the victim then it seems less likely to happen to us. And so it becomes an easy fix: don't drink excessively around the opposite sex, dress conservatively and don't be a "slut." But, the problem is, rape isn't exclusive. It happens to people who are virgins and people who recoil at the idea of a mini skirt. It can happen no matter the circumstances, no matter the gender.

Turner's case:

Brock Turner, rapist (not Stanford swimmer, as the media insists), walked out of jail after serving only three months of his already lenient six-month sentence, Sept. 2, 2016. He was serving time for sexually assaulting a girl behind a dumpster after a frat party.

She was barely conscious at the time. The trial gained further publicity after the victim read a letter to Turner at the trial detailing the crime and the mental anguish it put her through. He still only got six months, even though a

jury found him unanimously guilty of three felony counts (assault with intent to commit rape of an intoxicated or unconscious person, penetration of an intoxicated person and penetration of an unconscious person). The prosecutor argued for six years, even though he faced up to 14. Turner's father went so far as to declare the six-month sentence (with three years of parole and registering as a sex offender) a "steep price to pay for 20 minutes of action," according to *The Washington Post*.

The consequences:

In comparison, according to California law, where Turner's case took place, someone could go to jail for one to three years and face fines of up to \$10,000 for vandalism. Someone could also go to jail for up to six months for trespassing and petty theft. Somehow, Judge Aaron Persky, who tried Turner's case, viewed his crime as level to those aforementioned.

The judge chose to only sentence him to six months in jail because he thought a prison sentence would have a "severe impact" and "adverse collateral consequences" on Turner, according to *The Atlantic*. Nevermind the severe impact on the victim. Nevermind her degrading mental health. Nevermind her sleepless nights.

"Your damage was concrete; stripped of titles, degrees, enrollment," the unnamed victim in her letter to Turner said. "My damage was internal, unseen, I carry it with me. You took away my worth, my privacy, my energy, my time, my safety, my intimacy, my confidence, my own voice."

Turner's case is a small piece of a larger puzzle. In fact, his case is even unique because it made it to trial. According to RAINN, out of every 100 rapes, only nine get prosecuted. Of those nine, five lead to a felony conviction and of those five, three rapists will spend only

a single day in prison. Furthermore, *USA Today* and journalists from more than 75 Gannett newspapers and TEGNA TV stations found at least 70,000 neglected rape kits in an open-records campaign covering 1,000-plus police agencies. We live in a culture that makes it so difficult to receive justice for rape, it's not uncommon to wonder if it's even worth it to report it. If anything positive will even come from it. If anyone even cares.

Moving forward:

According to RAINN, 82 percent of sexual assault victims under the age of 18 are female, and females ages 16-19 are four times more likely to be victims

"YOU TOOK AWAY MY WORTH, MY PRIVACY, MY ENERGY, MY TIME, MY SAFETY, MY INTIMACY, MY CONFIDENCE, MY OWN VOICE."

-ANONYMOUS

of rape, attempted rape or sexual assault. The stats almost guarantee if one of us isn't sexually assaulted, someone we know will be. That terrifies me. But it also makes me incredibly angry.

Something has to change. This isn't a political issue; it shouldn't be polarizing. Sexual assault doesn't discriminate between black or white, liberal or conservative. This is an issue of people, and allowing people to live free of fear.

We always hear what *should* happen. We *should* stop blaming the victim. We *should* pass stricter assault laws. We *should* teach people not to rape instead of how to keep yourself safe from it. But, until we actually do something with all of the *shoulds*, nothing is going to change.

So, let's do something. ♦