

# OPINION

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## Sexual assault victims have to fight to find their voices

### WE MUST LEARN TO LISTEN AND STOP DISCREDITING VICTIMS

Imagine you're going through your worst nightmare. All you want is to scream so someone will hear you, or run as fast as you can so you'll be far away from it, but you can't. It's a relief to wake up and realize that you're in your own bed, at home and safe, isn't it?



BY BEATRIZ CALDAS  
STAFF WRITER

Unfortunately, to some people, their beds are actually the source of their nightmares.

Emma Sulkowicz, a Columbia University senior, came forward last semester and admitted she had been sexually assaulted. As shocking as it may be, the school didn't believe a word she said and, therefore, didn't expel or suspend her rapist. So, she found a way to overcome her fears.

"For my senior thesis, I'll be doing a piece called 'Carry that Weight' where I will be carrying this dorm room mattress with me everywhere I go for as long as I attend the same school as my rapist," said Sulkowicz in an YouTube video on the Columbia Daily Spector channel.

A reporter from The Daily Beast, Cathy Young, contacted Sulkowicz to write an article about what happened. However, it became clear to Sulkowicz that Young, as many other reporters had, thought her a deceiver.

One of the reasons why they thought of her that way is because she was friends with her rapist and had had sex with him before.

"We know from the data that we have, that 90 percent of the sexual assaults occurring on college campuses are by friends, by intimate partners, by hookup partners, by people the survivors knew and trusted," said sophomore, Community Aids Awareness Project Member and consent educator and intern for the sexual violence prevention coordinator Molly Anne Marcotte.

The fact that sexual assault on college campuses is still ongoing isn't a surprise to anyone. But, it might be

shocking to know that a lot of people refuse to come forward thanks to the massive criticism they hear from social and mass media.

"I've heard people speak, and I've heard people who voiced their opinion about it, and it is pretty scary the thought that they go through, like 'Should I report them? Should I not?'" said senior Joshua Williams.

The problem relies on the image of the perfect victim. "The concept of the 'perfect victim' is very interesting," said first-year and Vice-President of Sexual Assault Awareness Support Advocacy Eliza Stevenson. "People have this image of the survivor as a white, straight girl who's a virgin and the perpetrator as someone like a man with a mask in a dark alley.

"Of course that scenario has happened as well, but incest assaults, assaults on black women and in the LGBTQ community are some of the most unreported rapes."

Another reason why a lot of survivors have been criticized is because they wait a long time to report a rape.

"It is not uncommon for survivors to wait days or even years before telling others about their experience," said Wellness Education Coordinator and Community Director Kristie Wyatt in an email interview. "Trauma (such as sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence) affects each survivor differently, and there is no 'right' way to respond."

There must be comprehension and compassion for victims of sexual assault or rape.

"A sexual assault becomes such a big part of a survivor's daily life and it's a long journey to process it," said junior the President of SAASA Alexandra Barbour in an email interview. "It's not something that can be rushed, so it's unfortunate that survivors are criticized for trying to heal on their own timeline."

"We all, as human beings and as a society, must stop judging those who also have to carry a 'mattress' around and help them by sharing the weight. No one should feel helpless and alone while facing their own nightmares.

"So, when someone comes to you, and wants to share something with you, I think that we need to sit down and shut our mouths," said Marcotte

In other words: less questions, more listening.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## In response to the shooting of three American Muslims

Though we may not yet know with certainty the killer's motives in taking the lives of three young Americans, practicing Muslims in their prime, we do know the crime was not motivated by "an ongoing neighbor dispute over parking." This initial statement released by Chapel Hill police is an insult to any thinking person. To kill another human being, much less three human beings, is a radical act. Multiple factors are certain to be at play when someone spontaneously or with premeditation commits such heinous acts — mental state, social conditioning, deep-seated beliefs — lines of reasoning which justify the act to the killer. But, the fact is, these killings will resonate as a hateful act regardless of whether or not they are formally recognized as a "hate crime." The reason for this is the level of vitriol and hatred directed against Muslims in this country at this time. The hateful murderous acts that are being committed in the name of Islam by ISIS in the Middle East give us non-Muslim U.S.-Americans a feeling of false righteousness. We conflate religion, region and culture. We refuse to learn the differences between these; we block complexity in order to fabricate a monolithic other bearing the face of evil. Our media teaches us to think badly, if we are thinking at all. Unsurprisingly, we reflect back what we see yet remain blind to our own distorted image.

I am moved by images and stories I am hearing of people of various religions, including Jewish and Christian, who are showing and expressing their solidarity with Muslim communities in Chapel Hill. This reaching out to comfort the grieving is significant. But I also want us to think about how we treat each other when not in the midst of local tragedy, when we are talking about difficult political issues, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I was deeply disappointed that I was not able to hear the Salaita talk in the Frank building. That is, not able to hear a Palestinian-Jordanian-American speaking in a building on Guilford campus donated by a Jewish-American family. If we can't share a space to talk to one another, then we unwittingly replicate the barriers that make it impossible for people of Israel/Palestine to live together in the holy land. I was disappointed to read Rabbi Gutman's false analogy between Salaita and the KKK in a local paper. In trying to make the other sound radically evil, our own speech "radicalizes" to shut thinking down.

I am a person of Jewish heritage who spends a significant time at Guilford College. The difficult discussions that have taken place on this campus have been meaningful to me. My models have been Max Carter and retired professor Jonathan Malino, who recently led a group of students through Palestine and Israel, as well as Professor Diya Abdo, who, through her teaching and organization of events, makes dialogue of all kinds possible. We need to make our campus safe from violence and harassment for everyone. However, let's be clear, no campus worth its salt as an intellectual institution should or can be safe. In learning we confront fears and prejudice. In opening up to the other we experience pain and possibility.

Audrey Berlowitz, community activist

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## The tree remains a part of our logo

In 1897, Mark Twain wrote "The report of my death was an exaggeration." Twain wrote this in response to public confusion between a cousin's illness and his own demise. I thought about that when I read the opinion piece about the entrance sign and College logo in the The Guilfordian on Feb. 6.

The piece, written by staff writer Lesly Vasquez, suggested that the College dropped the tree from its logo altogether because it does not appear on the recently updated entrance sign. In fact, the tree remains an important element in the expanded logo system that was launched in mid-2013.

With the new logo system we have options for communicating the Guilford name and identity. The marks include a signature (Guilford College) as well as an emblem (Guilford College and tree) that has versions with and without the seven core values.

The emblem, including the tree, is displayed on the website, social media pages, major publications, stationery and business cards — making highly visible impressions far beyond the corner of Friendly and New Garden. Also, the banners along the entrance road and Founders walk feature the emblem.

The signature was chosen for the entrance sign because it clearly communicates the name of the college to people in transit and is best suited for the horizontal format of the sign. It is typical for colleges and universities to display their signature on entrance signs.

I am heartened by the enthusiasm for the tree and respect and understand the opinions about the change in the sign. Moreover, I would like all interested parties to know the tree is alive and well in our hearts, minds and in the new logo system.

Ty Buckner, Associate Vice President Communications & Marketing

# Black History

## MONTH 2015

Contact [mrc@guilford.edu](mailto:mrc@guilford.edu) to register for the All Black Everything Symposium

# 25

WEDNESDAY

### The Who Is Black?

Panel Discussion  
Power, Colorism & Identity

6 p.m.-8 p.m.  
Joseph M. Bryan Jr. Auditorium

# 27

FRIDAY

### All Black Everything

Symposium  
Featuring: Studie Nallo,  
professor of social work at the  
University of South Carolina

9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Joseph M. Bryan Jr. Auditorium

# 28

SATURDAY

### Brothers and Sisters in Blackness Caribbean Dance Party

Time To Be Announced  
Community Center

# 7

SATURDAY (MARCH)

### Our City Tour: Civil Rights & Mural Tour of Greensboro

Only 75 seats available  
Contact [mrc@guilford.edu](mailto:mrc@guilford.edu) to sign up