

THE BLUE BANNER

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The Blue Banner is UNC Asheville's student newspaper. We publish each Tuesday except during summer sessions, finals week and holiday breaks. Our office is in Karpen 019.

The Blue Banner is a designated forum for free speech and welcomes letters to the editor, considering them on the basis of interest, space and timeliness. Letters and articles should be emailed to the editor-in-chief or to the appropriate section editor. Letters should include the writer's name, year in school and major, or other relationship to UNCA. Include a phone number to aid in verification. All articles are subject to editing.

EDITORIAL

VALIDATING SURVIVORS' STORIES BREAKS PREDATORY CYCLE

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Last week's congressional hearing concerning U.S. Supreme Court Nominee Brett Kavanaugh and his accuser, Christine Blasey Ford, fell nothing short of the redundant process survivors know all too well. The hearing, prolonging the decision of Kavanaugh's appointment, demanded a price to be paid by Ford: her emotional and physical safety.

Since the fall of Harvey Weinstein and other powerful men to follow during the #MeToo Movement, we repeatedly ask the question: how did these men acquire such gravitas in our society? The answer: for decades, we have allowed it to stew, slowly and steadily, as these once young men receive a coming-of-age pass into the adult world despite their acts of sexual violence.

According to Neil Malamuth, a psychologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, behaviors of sexual aggression and rape tend to begin in males during their late teens and early twenties—approximately the age in which one would place in late high school into the first several years of college. Typically, these crossed boundaries begin with victims that the perpetrator knows. While some commit acts of sexual assault only once or twice, others tend to commit the acts again and more frequently, the research suggests.

Antonia Abbey, a social psychologist at Wayne State University, found that the response of the perpetrator indicates future acts of sexual violence. Abbey's research suggests that while men who rape once and who feel remorse likely will not commit the act again, men who rape and blame their victim are more likely to rape again.

Acts of serial sexual violence begin at the collegiate level. Young perpetrators roam rampant on our campuses often overlooked or dismissed as "boys will be boys" comments and similar arguments gleam at the victims who receive no remedy or justice for their

assault.

Relentlessly, defendants of those such as Kavanaugh question why acts committed in the past weigh heavily on one's present and future. But, if the term "rapist" were to be replaced with the term "murderer," would their perception be altered? Perhaps if sexual assault was weighed equally with murder — as both considered criminal offenses — then defendants would view both as permanently hindering for the victim and permanently defining for the perpetrator.

Seeing survivors such as Ford willingly bring themselves into the public eye to tell the accounts of their assault more often than not have no motive to do so out of destruction — nothing good comes to the individual who is scrutinized, threatened or shamed for speaking out about their traumatizing experience. In her opening statement to Congress on Thursday, Ford noted the overwhelming death threats and criticisms she has received since coming forward. She also noted she and her family have been forced to move from their home to several secure locations with guards.

Additionally, the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network reports approximately 70 percent of rape or assault victims experience moderate to severe distress, a much larger percentage than for any other violent crime.

The notion that one would come into the spotlight and risk their well being for the the diminishment of one man's reputation is a self-collapsing argument composed by fervent adversaries refusing to reference the countless studies and statistics that prove this situation more likely than not.

Only when we look at the levels of sexual violence occurring in our academic communities and closely scrutinizing these abusers more frequently will we be able to decrease perpetrators of sexual violence having authoritative power over our societies, which loom with buoyant hope that future