

Sexual Assault on Campus September 2014

In January 2013, two female students, Andrea Pino and Annie Clark, and three others, filed a 34-page complaint against the University of North Carolina with the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Pino and Clark organized the complaint, but Pino asserted in an e-mail that the contributions of the other three women were essential. The five plaintiffs had been sexually assaulted and had asked for protection and support on numerous occasions from University administrators. UNC administrators had responded repeatedly to the plaintiffs that their policies were in compliance. Fifteen months after the complaint was filed, UNC-CH formed a 21-member task force of administrators, faculty, staff and students led by former Philadelphia sex crimes prosecutor Gina Smith. "By filing a complaint, we created a conversation that never would've happened," said Andrea Pino. (News and Observer, Jane Stancil).

The complaint (as well as others made against other universities) garnered a great deal of publicity, and eventually brought the issue of sexual assault on campus into the political arena. Pino and Clark were primary organizers of an underground national network of activists (IX Network) and with others, helped organize a website, *End Rape On Campus* (endrapeoncampus.org), which advises collegiate women on how to file complaints against their institution. Using these two avenues, the two young women began assisting others in Filing Title IX and Clery Act complaints. The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act is the landmark federal law that requires colleges and universities across the U.S. to: 1.) publish an annual security Report by October 1, 2.) to have a public crime log, 3.) to disclose crime statistics for incidents in seven major categories that occur on campus, in unobstructed public areas immediately adjacent to or running through the campus and at certain non-campus facilities.

In March, 2014, Pino and Clark visited Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, a sponsor of earlier legislation dealing with the military's handling of sexual assaults in its ranks, to breathe more fire into their campaign of awareness. Started by the efforts of activist college women, the problem came to the forefront and a bipartisan group of senators introduced a bill on July 30, 2014, aimed at addressing the rampant problem of sexual assault on college campuses. Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo), one of the bill's sponsors, released the results of a survey that showed that more than 40 percent of the schools had not conducted a sexual assault investigation over the last five years, and that 33 percent provided no training to students. (Washington Post Blogs, She-the-People) Among the bill's provisions are more training for personnel at colleges and universities, new campus resources and support services for student survivors, enforceable Title IX penalties and stiffer penalties for Clery Act violations. Under the bill, a nationwide survey of college students about their experiences of sexual assault would be required, and a uniform process

would be created for reporting and investigative procedures. “It creates a system where there is no special preference because somebody can dunk a basketball or throw a ball 80 yards down the field,” said Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla). While I confess to some skepticism about Sen. Rubio’s hope, it may spark a change in campus culture.

The courage and resourcefulness of these two women have publicized a problem on university campuses that has existed for decades. Less than two years after they filed their complaint and were joined by a national chorus of voices—women who had undergone similar experiences—the White House released guidelines aimed at increasing pressure on universities to more aggressively combat sexual assaults on campus. The government will also open a website, NotAlone.gov, to track enforcement and provide victims with information. (NY Times, Jennifer Seinhauer) At UNC-CH, Gina Smith said that just meeting standards is not enough. “Compliance is the floor,” she said. “We want the well-being of our students to be—the sky is the limit.” (N&O, Jane Stancill)

To help campus organizations and administrators, AAUW has assembled an *Ending Campus Sexual Assault Tool Kit*. I urge those of you who have access to a computer, especially if you are affiliated with a campus, to peruse the information. Sexual assaults beget victims. As individuals, we need to know how to help them and ensure that our laws and institutions protect them.

I look forward to seeing each one of you at our **Saturday, September 20 meeting in the Dogwood Room (downstairs) at the Seymour Senior Center at 10 a.m.** We will open our next year’s programs with Sue Tolleson-Reinhart, a professor with a broad academic background and an interesting perspective.