

Vanderbilt trial brought new attention to horror of rape

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Many survivors never report their sexual assault, and even fewer are able to prosecute their offender.



(Photo: For The Tennessean)

Our community has been privy to the horrendous details of the Vanderbilt rape case over the last three weeks.

Rape and sexual assault are no strangers to the media, but the airing of the Vanderbilt rape trial has brought new attention and perspective to the horrific realities of rape.

This case has been disturbing on so many levels: the lack of bystander intervention, the unfathomable acts by the rapists, the cover-up attempts, the victim blaming.

The bottom line is this: this young woman was brutally raped and assaulted; she was a non-consenting party in these unthinkable acts by these young men.

She did absolutely nothing to deserve or to cause the violent acts inflicted upon her.



THE TENNESSEAN

Vandy rape trial call to action: Fight sexual assault

(<http://www.tennessean.com/story/opinion/editorials/2015/01/27/vandy-rape-trial-call-action-fight-sexual-assault/22427687/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin=>)

As a community, we should honor the bravery, strength, courage and determination of this young woman; not only did she survive these brutal attacks, she also survived a very public and graphic trial.

Many survivors never report their sexual assault, and even fewer are able to prosecute their offender(s). It is so important that we respect and support the rights of all survivors and realize that the choice they make is the right choice for them at the time.

More importantly, it is time for our community to take a stand against sexual violence. My sincerest hope is that if something positive comes as a result of our community's exposure to the graphic details of the Vanderbilt rape case these past three weeks, it is that we have built intolerance to the gross realities of rape and sexual assault.

No longer should we blame the victim by questioning how much she had to drink, what she was wearing, or where she was.

Instead, our focus must change to placing blame and responsibility in the hands of the offenders. The more appropriate questions should be, why would someone engage in such inconceivable acts at the expense and harm of another human being? Why would someone believe that forced sexual acts upon another human being are acceptable behaviors? Why should rape ever be an un-punishable crime?

This is an opportune time for our community to put an end to sexual violence by increasing active bystander intervention, holding offenders accountable for their behaviors, and being willing to have conversations that start with talking about respect, consent and healthy relationships.

To the young woman who endured these brutal attacks and this public trial: we admire your strength, courage and bravery; you truly are a survivor who has given a voice to many who have yet to be heard, and for that we thank you.

To all sexual assault survivors: it was not your fault. No one deserves or can to anything to cause rape and sexual abuse.

To our community: Let's take a stand against sexual violence and become active bystanders. Let's continue this conversation to change social norms about sexual violence so that our young people can attend college without the fear of experiencing rape or sexual assault.

As The Tennessean's editorial said yesterday, "our entire community needs to rally around stopping sexual violence". Contact the Sexual Assault Center to join us in this fight.

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