Shining a Spotlight on Campus Sexual Violence

A Project Proposal from The Media Consortium

Did you know that 23.1% of female undergraduates and 5.4% of male undergraduates experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation? (Statistics from [RAINN.org](https://www.rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence)).

A simple google of “campus rape, “ however, turns up top results that dismiss campus rape statistics as “misleading,” ([CNN](http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/28/health/campus-rape-book-author-cnntv/)), a “myth” ([City Journal](https://www.city-journal.org/html/campus-rape-myth-13061.html)), or not really happening (a [USAToday](college.usatoday.com/.../study-89-of-colleges-reported-zero-campus-rapes-in-2015) report citing a study that 89% of colleges reported zero campus rape).

Instead of attempting to address the problem of campus rape, too many people in positions of power—and too many members of the corporate media-- are invested in denying that campus rape is happening. One reason for that is that right-wing media plays a steady drum-beat of accusations against survivors, claiming that the rape they experienced was actually consensual, or that a sexual assault was no more than “rough play.”

Right-wing media excels at repetition. And that’s what we must do as well if we want to tell the story of sexual violence on campus. We need news outlets to publish and produce stories about campus violence even on ordinary days when there is no celebrity rape case—because on those days we know undergrads are still being raped and assaulted.

**To solve the problem of sexual violence on campus, we need consistent, powerful storytelling that puts a human face on campus sexual violence. We need to make the statistics gripping by using the best data graphics available. And mostly we need to repeat the story, over and over.**

The Media Consortium is uniquely positioned to ensure that stories about campus sexual violence hit the news on a regular basis. We are a network of 80 independent progressive news outlets. Our members—the Young Turks, Truthout, feministing, Colorlines, AlterNet, Bitch, In These Times, the Nation, Truthdig and Ms magazine—know the story of campus rape.

What’s more, Media Consortium members see themselves as part of a media movement. We want to work together to make social change. We call it “transforming the media to transform society.” We know we can have more impact when we work together than when we work separately.

**We propose to steal from the right-wing playbook. Every week, for 52 weeks, at least one of our members will publish a story on campus rape. And our members will support each other by tweeting those stories out with the #campusrape tag.**

At first, we will focus on putting a human face on sexual violence. We will unearth stories that have not been told, such as male undergraduates who have been raped, and the many, many, women of color whose rape stories on campus are often hidden. We will support these stories with exciting graphics that travel well on Facebook, and invite followers to our special Facebook page to share their stories. Those shared stories will go back into infographics that will be facebooked again.

As the year progresses, we will turn to solutions stories. How can we stop campus rape? What can be done to protect young people while encouraging them to experiment and develop independent healthy lives?

Our goals will be:

1) To ensure that the voices of survivors of campus sexual violence are heard, measured by engagement with our #campusrape Facebook page as well as on our member sites

2) To change the public conversation so that the crisis of campus sexual violence is widely acknowledged, as measured by stories showing up in media with the biggest national reach such as CNN, USA Today, CBS radio, and Buzzfeed.

3) To begin a new conversation focused on solutions to the campus sexual violence crisis, as measured by increased engagement with solutions on our member’s sites.

As media, we can do a much better job of telling the story of campus sexual violence. There is no better time than the present to begin the work.

**About the Media Consortium**

The Media Consortium was founded in 2006 as a non-profit network of independent progressive news outlets. Our mission is to transform the world by transforming media, telling the stories that lead to real change. We now have over 80 members, including Mother Jones, the Nation, Democracy Now!, and the Young Turks. Our outlets are on all platforms and reach different audiences. Together, they reach over 100 million people in the United States, Canada, and around the world.

You can find out more about us at <https://themediaconsortium.org>

Our Executive Director, Jo Ellen Green Kaiser, has helmed the Media Consortium since 2011. She has written at length on topics in journalism at a wide range of publications. Follow her @jgksf

Budget: $75,000

Project Management: $20,000

Bookkeeping, Audit, Reporting: $5,000

Social Media Curator: $7,200

FB engagement is critical

InfoGraphics Expert: $12,000

Graphics drive FB engagement

Goal: 1 great graphic/month

Capacity Support, News Outlets\*: $30,000

Contingency $800

Total $75,000

\*Budget note: People often ask why we need to pay media to do stories when that is their job. The answer is that the business model for news is broken. News organizations no longer make money from advertising or subscriptions—they now get funding from supporters like you.

Every story costs money to produce and sometimes stories news outlets want to produce don’t get done because they have to make hard choices about where to spend their money. The amount of money we provide news outlets to do stories does NOT cover the cost of the story. Instead, it provides an incentive—a discount on the overall story cost.

We expect to involve 30 outlets in this project, and to give them a minigrant of $250 for every text-story they produce, and $1000 for radio shows or video stories, which can provide better engagement. We will aim to generate at least 50 text-based stories over the year, with at least one story a week, plus at least 15 radio or video pieces.