



# ARE 1 IN 5 WOMEN RAPED AT COLLEGE?

## CAROLINE KITCHENS

Are American college campuses “rape cultures?” Are they dangerous places where sexual assaults against women are happening at an alarming rate?

According to many gender activists, academics and politicians, the answer is yes. Here’s what the Vice-President of the United States, Joe Biden, said in 2014.

“We know the numbers: one in five of every one of those young women who is dropped off for that first day of school, before they finish school, will be assaulted, will be assaulted in her college years.”

Let’s take a closer look at the Vice President’s claim.

Rape is a horrific crime, and rapists are rightfully despised. We have strict laws against sexual assault that everyone wants to see enforced. But, while rape is certainly a very serious problem, there is simply no evidence of a national campus rape epidemic, and there’s certainly no evidence that sexual violence is a “cultural norm” in 21st century America. In fact, rates of rape in the US are very low and they’ve been declining for decades. Why would it be any different on a college campus? Where, then, does the 1 in 5 rate that Vice President Biden cites come from?

Well, it turns out it comes from a study conducted over the Internet at two large universities, one in the Midwest and one in the South. The survey was anonymous, no one’s claims were verified and terms were not clearly defined. In round numbers a total of 5,000 women participated. Based on their responses, the authors, not the participants, determined that 1,000 had been victims of some type of “non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact.”

And voila! From one vaguely worded, unscientific survey we suddenly arrive at “a rape culture on college campuses.” Tellingly, the study authors have since explicitly stated that it is “inappropriate” to use their survey to make that claim.

Much more comprehensive data from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) estimates that about 1 in 52.6 college women will be victims of rape or sexual assault over the course of four years. That’s far too many, but it’s a long way from 1 in 5.

The same BJS data also reveal that women in college are safer from rape than college-aged women who are not enrolled in college.

But the truth doesn’t serve the purposes of feminist activists or vote-seeking politicians. Lies

work much better. And the 1 in 5 claim is tantamount to a lie. Here are just a few examples of what this lie has wrought.

At Scripps College, Pulitzer-Prize winning commentator George Will was disinvited from giving a speech. The reason? He had dared to question the “rape culture” mantra in a column he wrote.

At the all-women Wellesley College, students demanded that the administration remove a campus sculpture of a sleepwalking man wearing only underpants. Why? Well, because the image of a nearly naked male could “trigger” memories of sexual assault for victims.

According to Harvard Law professor, Jeannie Suk, students now ask teachers not to include questions about rape law on exams for fear that such disturbing questions might cause them to perform less well.

And at Brown University, students were so traumatized by a debate on the subject of campus sexual assault that activists organized a “safe room” equipped with coloring books, Play-Doh, calming music, and a video of frolicking puppies.

No less absurd are the attempts by colleges and legislators to cure this non-existent plague. In California and New York, students now have to live by so-called “Affirmative Consent” laws. The California law says that affirmative consent by all parties must be “ongoing throughout a sexual activity,” while the New York law says that “silence or lack of resistance, in and of itself, does not demonstrate consent.”

Confused? Pity the poor college students who have to figure this out. If it wasn’t so serious, it would be laughable. But it’s not funny to a growing number of young men who find themselves accused of sexual assault, publicly shamed and then brought before campus judicial panels that are guided by rape-culture theory. In such proceedings, due process is an afterthought: it’s guilty because accused.

But here’s the best way to prove that the 1 in 5 number is phony. Ask yourself this question: would you send your daughter to a place for four years where there was a twenty percent chance she would be raped or sexually assaulted?

Of course not.

Good rarely, if ever, comes from lies. The one in five “rape culture” lie is no exception.

I’m Caroline Kitchens of the American Enterprise Institute for Prager University.