

Campus Sexual Assault: In defense of women learning self-defense

19% of undergraduate women experience sexual assault with as many as 2.2 million women sexually assaulted while attending college every year. Its time they are taught self defense.

by **Genevieve Malandra**

Sexual assault on college campuses is reaching epidemic levels.

The CDC reports that 19% of undergraduate women experience attempted or completed sexual assault while attending college. Females now outnumber males on college campuses and are 11.5 million of the 20.2 million people who entered college in 2015.

Based upon these statistics, by 2019, as many as 2.2 million women will experience sexual assault while attending college every year.

Even more startling, in 87% of cases, the perpetrator is someone familiar to the victim. This implies that quite a few of our nation's "best and brightest" young men are engaging in criminally violent behavior.

“When you’re facing an injustice of this magnitude we need organizations addressing it from all sides; Men being taught to respect women, women learning how to empower themselves to avoid violence.”

— Dallas Jessup
Founder, Just Yell Fire

Read more at <http://www.commdiginews.com/life/campus-sexual-assault-in-defense-of-women-learning-self-defense-56510/#vFiGy5seERDMud0B.99>

That statement will most likely be met by head nods of agreement affirming that the boogie man is exactly who the liberal media has been telling us it is: Heterosexual men.

However, the reality is not so simple. If two otherwise rational and law-abiding human beings keep finding themselves in situations where one of them leaves assigned a violent criminal and the other a traumatized victim, something complex is occurring.

To stop these crimes and reverse this trend, both college men and women need to learn boundaries and, at the same time, women need to learn to defend themselves.

“We all know pedestrians have the right of way, but if you step out in front of a bus and get killed it is no consolation that you were in the right. I do agree that we as a society need to work harder at teaching boys how to treat girls at a young age so they grow to be men who know how to treat women, but we as women can’t step back and expect bad things not to happen because we don’t want them to.

When you’re facing an injustice of this magnitude we need organizations addressing it from all sides; Men being taught to respect women, women learning how to empower themselves to avoid violence,” says Dallas Jessup the founder of Just Yell Fire, a global organization

that empowers women to live their lives the way they want, without fear of rape, abduction or assault.

To end college sexual assault, affirming two ideas is critical: Everyone has a God-given right to live in a reality free from violent crime and everyone has to take a part in creating that reality.

The April 2014, “Preventing Sexual Violence on College Campuses: Lessons from Research and Practice” a report prepared for the White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault, contains no mention of interventions which focus on self-defense or enhancing interpersonal relationship tactics for women.

The study places the responsibility for ending sexual assault on men and bystanders. Our culture has become so high on “finger pointing” and “the victim mentality” that we may actually stifle those we aim to protect.

Kelley Kitley, a Chicago-based psychotherapist, survivor of a random act of sexual assault on the street while in college, and now a therapist who works with some college-aged women says, “I hear of a lot of women in this group, on a date or at a party end up in the bedroom alone and get pressured or even drugged. Women need to have a sense of setting boundaries.

They need to think, ‘I will not go home alone with someone that I don’t know’.

I’m not advocating a fear-based model, but rather hoping women can come from a place of positive self-esteem. I have a 7 year old daughter and when she approaches dating age I am going to regularly rehearse with her exactly what to say if she is ever approached by a guy inappropriately or asked to go home with a guy too early on in the dating cycle.”

Jarrett Arthur, the founder of a comprehensive self-defense program for women and mothers has worked with over 1000 college-aged women, teaching them self-defense on campuses all over the United States. She says,

“This can’t be an issue of just educating men, it has to be an issue of also educating women. Our current culture respects persistence for the person pursuing and emphasizes the person who is being pursued to let someone down softly. We have to do better at teaching effective boundary setting.”

Jarrett adds,

“I am also a believer, that this confidence that women derive from self-defense training and taking control of their safety seeps into other areas of their lives. These are skills they can

use in their career, day-to-day at work etc.”

Kitley says of work with her clients,

”It’s important to be aware of our surroundings. I encourage the women I work with to look at their behaviors such as walking around alone at 4 am, or getting in an Uber so drunk they pass out. I believe we should be putting a significant amount of funding into things like self-defense programs and they should be mandatory for all freshman women.”

Any person who prefers to remain a victim dilutes his or her own potential and ultimately loses the power to change the environment and their own circumstances. Within the “victim paradigm,” there are few probable solutions to a complex problem like the type of sexual assault occurring most frequently on our nation’s campuses. ■