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Final Argument

Days before New Year's Eve of 2012, a twenty-three-year-old physiotherapy intern from Delhi, India died from devastating injuries after six men brutally raped her on a bus. She had been traveling with a male companion at the time of the incident, and after the assailants raped and beat her, even tearing out her intestines, she and her battered friend were tossed into the streets like trash. A storm of protests ensued after this incident came to light, and men and women in India and throughout the international community fervently blasted the systematic and cultural mistreatment of Indian women (Williams). However, this problem was not restricted to a single country or culture. In August 2012, Trent Mays and Ma'lik Richmond from Steubenville, Ohio raped an unnamed girl who had passed out, took photos of the rape and proceeded to send them to their peers (Almasy). A month later in California, Audrie Potts committed suicide after her teenage rapists circulated photos of the assault (Salonga). In April of this year, Canadian teen Rehtaeh Parsons died following a suicide attempt that stemmed from the humiliation, despair and harassment she faced after photos of her rape permeated throughout her community (Jauregui). Several cases of teenage girls who have taken their lives after photos of their sexual assault went viral have shed a blinding light on what is called a "rape culture," which, unfortunately, exists not just close to home, but right in front of us all.

What does all of this mean in the context of a college campus? Institutions of higher learning—respectable schools where students are encouraged to be principled and open-minded—are, ironically enough, places where rape is all too prevalent and accepted. Two surveys of college-aged males collected by the Campus Advocacy Network at the University of Illinois in

Chicago reported that 35% of the survey's participants "admitted that, under certain circumstances, they would commit rape if they believed they could get away with it" while in a second survey 43% of college-aged men "admitted to using coercive behavior to have sex, including ignoring a woman's protest, using physical aggression, and forcing intercourse" ("Rape Supportive Attitudes"). The fact of the matter is that in the west and especially on college campuses there exists a culture where rape is tacitly accepted, euphemized, and even encouraged because the act of rape in a rape culture is neither a crime nor punishable. Given the statistics provided by the Campus Advocacy Network, college campuses host some of the most fertile environments for rape due to the influence of alcohol, the partying culture, and because such an offense is not thought of as monstrous or even serious. Why else would so many men admit to be willing to commit rape under circumstances that favor them? Why have almost half of the men surveyed likewise admitted to using force in order to coerce a woman into sex? Universities sure are a paradox; they welcome the brightest minds in the nation and allow those students and scholars to burgeon into leaders. At the same time, they are environments filled with people who are willing to execute such a crime against another human being. If college students wish to continue to pride themselves as the leaders of this world, then they must take a stand for their peers, for their values and for humanity, and challenge the culture of rape.

How do we fight against something so pervasive? First we need to understand what rape is and is *not*. Rape is *not* a game—it is not a joke. It is a crime that is perpetrated out of a suspension of human ethics on the part of the offender. Rape is a most heinous transgression that destroys lives and the dignity of both the victim and the perpetrator. Rape is an act that demonstrates the vulgarity, vileness and maliciousness when humankind is at its worst. Rape culture, however, does not perceive rape as a crime, for such a paradigm is reinforced by archaic and patriarchal notions that are antithetical to the values of modern-day, civilized human beings. These caveman beliefs hurt both women and men, as rape culture really neither favors nor protects men—it protects and favors monsters.

Secondly, we need to understand the paradigm constructed from outdated, patriarchal and sexist ideas that sustains the rape culture. The first big idea of this paradigm is that boys should have as much sex as they want and do whatever they need to do to get sex. But how does this lead to rape? Sex is different from rape, isn't it? Well, ideally, but oftentimes the two are fused, which can lead to grave consequences when two people are intoxicated and unable to think rationally. In other words, the line separating sex and rape can be crossed pretty quickly. Of course young boys are not taught to rape by their parents and community. No mother has ever told her son, "Hey, when you grow up, make sure that you rape someone." However, the forces that encourage rape lie covertly beneath the surface of our social perceptions, and such covertness is what makes rape culture so dangerous and yet so well protected. All too often we see people defending the rapists while blaming the victim, with statements such as "boys, girls and alcohol don't mix" and "boys will be boys." Seemingly trivial statements such as these become social mantras that set expectations for people, especially for boys, who are then encouraged to actively pursue sex by using whatever methods are at their disposal. When they can't bed someone with courting and flowers, then they are told that it's okay to be more coercive in order to get sex. Sex no longer becomes something that can be enjoyed by two people; it becomes something that someone has to get at all costs, and the more, the better. And with that, a seemingly harmless societal standard that encourages boys and the young men to have as much sex as they want—even at the expense of their sexual partner—becomes rape, and a young man who was living up to societal expectations but went too far becomes a criminal and a monster. The second big idea is that a female's worth and purpose are negligible once she is sexualized. When a girl or a woman dresses provocatively, then people assume that she is a slut who does not deserve respect, and that she's asking for to be raped. Suddenly, who cares about her dignity, her physical and mental wellbeing, and all that she means to her family and friends? She's wearing a miniskirt that is too short, so she deserves to be raped, right? Let that sink in for a moment and ask yourself if that

seems ethical or reasonable at all. For any humane person, such a chauvinistic and barbarous idea should be crucified.

Rape can begin with a few glasses of alcohol and some persuasion on a Saturday night, and result in catastrophic damage to families, communities and to the progression of humankind. The victim who was raped in Steubenville is forever damaged. Even worse, the parents of the Delhi victim, Rehtaeh Parsons, Audrie Pott will never see their daughters again. And as parents they had such high hopes for their children. They must have hoped that they would become doctors, scientists, writers and mothers. They must have pondered continuously over what to name their daughters. When they looked into their daughters' eyes they must have seen the entire universe in them; after all, the Delhi victim, Rehtaeh and Audrie were their parents' dreams and the objects of their unconditional love. No parent ever imagines that their children might one day commit suicide over the humiliation, rejection, and despair following a rape. Now they're gone—their children are dead.

It is not enough to know that rape under any circumstance is unethical. As college students and some of the brightest minds in the world with so much to offer, we need to catalyze a mainstream movement that proactively challenges rape culture as well as the patriarchal notions that reinforce it. If rape is a disgusting crime against humanity that is perpetrated by another person who has lost their own humanity, morals and ethics, then the most humane action to take is to fight the rape culture in the interest of both women and men. We need to demonstrate that men are not mindless animals and women are not sexual objects whose value is determined by their sexuality. Children should be taught that boys and girls can respect each other and understand human dignity and personal boundaries at any age. In a college setting where every now and then a sexual assault occurs and the victim is blamed while the criminal is pardoned, understand that allowing such crimes to happen undermines the principles of the twenty-first century, human rights and cherished and protected. Young people need to rise up and aid humanity's progression by challenging the anti-human prejudices that support rape culture.

Final Analysis

In the argument above, the claim made is that people in the west live in a rape culture where rape is disguised as mere sex, trivialized and then left unpunished. Given that there has been significant media coverage of the Delhi gang rape incident and the more recent cases involving Steubenville, Rehtaeh Parsons and Audrie Pott in the United States and Canada, the discussion of rape culture has erupted and prompted activists, communities and populations to challenge the beliefs and notions that protect such a paradigm. While protesters have blasted rape culture, at the same time defendants of the alleged rapists in those four cases have either blamed and threatened the victim or tried to cover up the crimes that transpired. The victim blaming, contentions and fervor have all continued to inflame the debate. People are beginning to realize the true gravity of this international pandemic and thus attempting to understand the roots of such a problem in hopes of achieving a solution.

The argument is directed toward college students who have an intellectual, ethical or emotional interest in the issue of rape and rape culture. This type of audience is especially receptive because students at universities live and study in an environment where sexual assault and misogyny are frighteningly common and rape is treated as a joke or a non-issue. The audience would find this argument in a university newspaper, such as *The Daily Texan*. By reading this piece, the audience should ideally feel empowered to challenge not only the rape culture, but also the archaic and essentially anti-human notions that buttress it.

Logos and pathos are the most effective and active appeals utilized in this argument, first initiating the discussion by giving examples of recent rapes that have occurred and been covered by the media. The setting then shifts to the general college campus, where the logical appeals are directed to the primary audience of college students. The main logical appeal employed in this argument (with the inclusion of statistics from a credible source) points out the irony of college campuses being the institutions of both bright young scholars with promising futures as well as sexual assault and rape, which should not be present in such a supposedly respectable setting.

Emphasizing this paradox instigates contemplation on the part of the audience, who is then more receptive to the argument of the author and more willing to challenge the rape culture, which—given the logic provided—threatens the integrity, scholasticism and general values of the university. With regard to pathetic appeals, the most emotionally charged portion of the argument is concentrated in the paragraph that brings attention to the parents and depicts them in a humanizing and intimate manner. This particular appeal invokes sympathy in the readers who have parents and will perhaps one day become parents to children whom they would forever protect and love. It shifts and shares the perspective of the parents with the audience, who, at the very least, can garner enough emotional imagery to experience a fraction of the grief and the devastation faced by the parents who have lost their children following a rape. One ideograph that is continuously emphasized is human dignity, which is stressed as a universally accepted point of contrast against rape, which, on the other hand, is considered a crime that violates that particular ideograph.

From the beginning to the end of the argument, one can see that the main stasis is policy. All of the appeals and assertions serve to impel the audience to proactively challenge a paradigm and an act that are denounced as inhumane and a shame to humanity, yet unjustly defended. This stasis is supported by the main topic of definition, which demonizes rape as a vile transgression that is carried out by monsters that have suspended their humanity. Likewise, rape culture defends and justifies the actions of these monsters and criminals, in the interest of upholding antiquated patriarchy and sexism at the expense of justice and human dignity.

Utilizing rhetorical figures can rouse an argument, and in this case the most prevalent rhetorical figure used at critical points in the argument is anaphora, the repetition of identical words at the beginnings of sentences. The first usage of anaphora is displayed during the expansion of the definition of rape, when the author repeats, “Rape is...rape is...” Repeating this particular phrase, especially with a word that ought to evoke disgust in the reader, creates a piling-on effect that continually compounds and more effectively conveys the heinousness and

the seriousness of rape as a crime. Another instance of anaphora is shown in the paragraph that mentions the victims' parents; usage of anaphora here is especially effective because repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of sentences progressively builds on the sentimental appeal, continually adding emotionally-charged momentum, and thus renders the audience more receptive to the claim and arguments made by author.

The rhetorical methods explicated above all serve to compel the audience into either immediate or gradual action, as the argument asserts that rape and rape culture are a widespread threat that victimizes both men and women, and this phenomenon—on both a wide scale and more narrow context—demonstrates regression of certain areas of humanity that continue to cling to sexist, prejudiced ideas. An ethical and reasonable reader will find this argument effective as a call to action against a crime and a culture that are void of both ethics and reason.

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