

Coming to terms with assault

April is Sexual Assault and Awareness Month, a time dedicated to shining light on a dark subject.

According to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, 20-25 percent of women in college reported attempted or completed rape (2008). However, according to AAUW (formally known as the American Association of University Women), 95 percent of victims in college do not report their abuse. They are scared and ashamed. They feel like it was their fault and no one will believe them. They feel dirty and don't want anyone to think the same way about them. They don't want to admit to themselves, let alone a stranger, it's true.

I know; I'm one of these women.

On June 9, 2006 — I will never forget the date — I was raped by two men in a hostel in London while on a study abroad trip. I did not report it. I went back to my room, closed my eyes and prayed when I woke up the next morning, it would all turn out to be just a nightmare.

And you know what? It worked. For more than a month I went on with my life, never thinking of the event. Then, reality struck. While having a heart to heart with a good friend, she confided in me and told me she had been raped. Of course my heart went out to her and I tried to comfort her. But, at the same time, I felt myself shatter as that night in London replayed in mind, over and over and over. I had completely repressed that memory; it was like it never happened. Then, all of a sudden, I couldn't stop reliving it and feeling the pain I felt that night.

I didn't deal with it right away, and be-

cause of that, I robbed myself of the opportunity to seek help and begin the healing process. Because I repressed the memory, I do not remember some of that night. Now, close to four years later, bits and pieces will randomly come to mind, making me relive it all over, yet again.

I know it's hard; I know it's painful; I know the shame and fear that fills victims. But I can't stress enough how important it is to seek support.

And while most victims of sexual assault are women, men can be victims as well. According to the Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault, an estimated 92,748 American men are sexually assaulted each year, and according to RAINN (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network), 33 percent of men will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.

It was extremely hard for me to admit what happened to me; with society's gender roles, I can't even imagine how hard it would be for a male. But based on my experience hiding from the truth, I think it's especially important for men to seek support.

When I first "came out" about what happened (and frankly, sometimes I still think this way), I tried to downplay what happened by thinking: "It's no big deal; rape isn't uncommon," or "I was drinking; I put myself in danger." But it's important to not think that way. In reality, the fact that it does happen to so many people actually makes it a big deal.

And the effects of sexual assault cannot be ignored either. According to AAUW, college student victims are 13 percent more likely to attempt suicide than those who haven't been assaulted. Victims may suffer from vari-



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ous emotional and psychological disorders, and according to The National Center for Victims of Crime, nearly one-third of all rape victims develop Rape-related Post-traumatic Stress Disorder sometime during their life.

Other statistics are startling as well. For example, according to Men Against Sexual Violence, two-thirds of male college students report they would consider raping a woman if they thought they could get away with it, and only 2 percent of all rapists are convicted and imprisoned.

The issue of sexual assault is too often pushed under the rug, but it's too important to not address. The first step is for victims to seek help. Sharing my story like this wasn't easy, but if I can encourage at least one victim to seek support or at least one person to be an advocate — or even one person to think critically about the issue — it will have been worth it.

For a list of resources, visit
[themet.metrostudentmediacom/
insight/opinion/](http://themet.metrostudentmediacom/insight/opinion/)

Relax guys, it's free expression

Two weeks ago I submitted to my editor a racist op-ed about how wrong interracial marriage is. It would have run on April 1 had my editor decided to run it, and the satirical side of the story would have been: my half-Samoan wife helped me write it. My editor chose not to run it, largely because he didn't want to face the kind of outrage the *Advocate* and Jef Otte went through with his satirical piece about President Obama's health care plan. Not wanting to deal with the fallout, I'd say he made the right decision; I personally was looking forward to the fallout.

Luckily for me, the editors at the *Advocate* had no issues running a racist controversial piece, so now I can make my point from two different perspectives. My first perspective being, I was censored out of fear of backlash by my newspaper, and the other perspective, a view different than the one most people hold, even a satirical one, was met with so much resistance the newspaper had to address an angry mob.

I don't fault my editor or my newspaper for not running my piece; it is his right and his responsibility to not run pieces he feels are wrong for the newspaper. He also told me he didn't find the piece all that funny, which I understand; I did work very hard to find arguments that have actually been made, so my piece, unlike Mr. Otte's, could have been a serious piece.

But the point I wanted to bring up, and Mr. Otte did bring up whether it was his intention or not, was why, at an institution of higher learning where ideas are supposed to flow freely and be respected, did this satire get such a response? My editor is under no obligation to print any op-ed that comes his way, but for anyone to be outraged or offended that the opinion was printed is ridiculous. We are at a center of higher learning to get different perspectives, even some we find reprehensible.

Censoring an opinion because you disagree with it is ignorant and dangerous.

That is not to say if you disagree you should not express your opinion. Expressing disagreement is just as much a part of the exchange of ideas as presenting ideas. The trouble is when ideas are considered too outrageous to be printed, the forum ceases to be an exchange of ideas. It is difficult to have a discussion if everyone in the room agrees.

I am by no means claiming all ideas are worth presenting. Some ideas, such as the ones I wrote in my piece that wasn't



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printed and in Mr. Otte's piece, are not to be taken seriously. In the cases of our pieces, they were never meant to be taken seriously, thus making them satire. Had either piece been presented to be taken seriously, they may not have been worthy of taking seriously. So don't take them seriously.

Censoring an opinion because you disagree with it is ignorant and dangerous. If an idea is so dangerous it shouldn't be spoken or written, it must have something very important to say; perhaps you should look at who has something to lose from the opinion. If an idea is merely offensive, it makes far more sense to recognize it as such and move on. Not all ideas are worth printing, but you should be very wary if someone tells you you're better off not hearing an opinion.

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