

# SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON CAMPUS

Power-conscious Approaches  
to Awareness, Prevention,  
and Response

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# SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON CAMPUS

Power-conscious Approaches  
to Awareness, Prevention,  
and Response

BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although I have spent a lot of time and energy in my professional career and personal life thinking about ways to more effectively address sexual violence, the ideas I share in this book are in no way exclusively mine. My thoughts about sexual violence and more effectively addressing it have developed over time through trial and error in my own practice, conversations with critically minded friends and colleagues who share my passion for eradicating violence, and by reading and attending conferences with many brilliant minds. I do my best to appropriately cite information as I know it, and I am sure that I have missed some important work here. Information about campus sexual violence is coming in a record number of ways (e.g., blogs, videos, reports, published journal articles, books) and exponentially faster than at any other point in our history. For these reasons, and because of my own limited perspective, I am confident that I have missed some very important resources and contributions to the work of eradicating sexual violence on college campuses. Even still, I share my thoughts with you as a contribution to the ongoing important work and hope that it reaches some people at the right time and the right place in their lives to make a difference.

As I engage in the work of coming to better understand power, privilege, and oppression, I acknowledge the labor (often unpaid) that women of color, trans folks, and people with additional minoritized identities do to educate me — a queer white cis woman — about oppression. A considerable

amount of my learning about oppression related to racism, genderism, and ableism, among other systems of domination, comes from “nonacademic” (i.e., not published in journal articles and featured at academic conferences) spaces, including blogs and online media. I cite many of these works throughout this book because I want other people who work in traditionally academic spaces to examine these perspectives, rooted in people’s lived experiences, as legitimate forms of knowledge. As illustrated throughout this text, we (those of us who work on college campuses) would make a lot more progress eradicating the world of sexual violence if we listened to more than just each other. Specifically, I want to name that the blogs *Black Girl Dangerous* and the *Crunk Feminist Collective*, and the organization INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence Collective, have had a profound impact on my understanding of power, privilege, and oppression as they intersect with sexual violence.

I am also grateful for the time, energy, and expertise of several individual people who have contributed to my thinking about eradicating violence. One of my all-time favorite collaborators and co-conspirators, Dr Jessica C. Harris, thank you for re-inviting me to this work and pushing me to see that I had something unique to offer from my location and positionality. Thank you for your critical, thoughtful work, and for shaping the discourse on about the experiences of women of color and sexual violence on college campuses. To the amazing sexual violence research team, Niah Grimes, Brittany Williams, Marvette Lacy, and Brean’a Parker, who spent the summer of 2017 reading and coding 540 articles about campus sexual violence, thank you. This is hard, exhausting, and emotional work, and I am grateful for your perseverance, critical perspectives, and compassion in getting it done. Thank you also to Brittany Williams, Sophia Flemming, Bernard Green, Marvette Lacy, and Chris Kopacz

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## FOREWORD

I sat in my college dorm room a month before my 21st birthday, editing a document that totaled dozens of pages. I had spent weeks combing through assigned reading, and it seemed that all the weeks of studying were culminating to this moment, when I would finally apply everything I had learned. But, the document I was editing wasn't a late term paper that I was desperate to turn in before midnight. It was a thesis-length collection of survivors' lives, their betrayals, and their hopes at seeking justice after being silenced by our university. Just five years ago, I became one of the first college sexual survivors to publicly file a Title IX complaint against their university. Back then, college officials rarely discussed sexual assault, administrators dismissed my concerns about noncompliant policies, and reporters laughed at my determination to inform them that campus sexual assault was one of the most pressing issues facing our country. I was a 20-year-old, first-generation queer Latina student taking on a 200-year-old university, and my identities weren't fit to be in the rooms where policies were decided.

For far too long, institutions have perpetuated the myth of sexual violence happening in rare, avoidable situations, predominantly catering awareness campaigns to upper-class white women. Sexual violence is a crime of power, and to defeat it, we must revolutionize the way society talks about sexual violence, and the way it's handled institutionally, socially, and politically. Powerlessness among women and queer people is not simply caused by their gender but how

their gender performance is perceived in the context of their race and sexuality. To assume that Black and Brown women and queer survivors have the same assumptive victimhood attributed to cisgender white women demonstrates an incomplete understanding of societal perceptions of race on not just an accused perpetrator but the validity of a victim's account. Rather than be attributed powerlessness because of their gender, women of color are hyper-sexualized or seen as "violent" or "provoking," performing their gender beyond the acceptable constraints of femininity as codified by white supremacy.

When I was a student, I walked the quad at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill every day as a Latina, as a queer woman, as a disabled person, as a first-generation student, and as a survivor of sexual assault. Each of my identities impacted how I sought support along my educational journey but rarely were administrators and faculty able to holistically address my challenges. According to Smith & Freyd's 2013 study, 40% of those reporting sexual assault also indicate experiencing Institutional Betrayal, a secondary trauma often in the form of victim blaming, silencing, or retaliation from their universities. For many students, this betrayal is often called a "second rape" and may dissuade a student from ever seeking support again, often leading to increased likelihood of developing psychiatric disabilities and affecting their educational trajectory. Despite graduating valedictorian from my high school, I dropped out of my university with only three courses left to complete my degree. I chose to file a federal complaint against the university I loved, not because I sought to punish the administration for harming me, but because I felt that I had exhausted every institutional avenue of support available. As of 2018, there are over 300 active investigations into Title IX violations at universities across the country, an over 600% increase in investigations since the Obama Administration released the

first public list of investigations in 2014. We know that every university in the country still struggles with supporting survivors, but as Chris Linder presents for readers, institutions can do more.

Since I began speaking at universities in the United States and abroad, I have heard administrators claim time and time again that their policies are compliant with Title IX, but very rarely have I met campus leaders that have pushed for their policies to be *beyond compliance*. I am often asked “what can we do better?” and I am now thrilled that I can give them a direct answer: read this book.

Chris Linder has done survivors and educators an invaluable service in putting together a blueprint to tackle campus sexual violence head on. With vulnerability and unparalleled personal experience, she guides readers through the work and theories of survivors and experts, encouraging institutions and advocates to push beyond the dynamics of victims and perpetrators and address sexual violence through a “power-conscious lens.” In publishing this book, Linder challenges us all to think beyond the headlines, and to center survivors in every area of our campuses. She challenges readers to see sexual violence as an equity issue, “rooted in issues of power, oppression, and privilege,” that takes more than prevention campaigns and well-meaning response programs to eradicate.

To eradicate sexual violence, we must address the structural racism that prevents survivors of color from being believed as often as white women.

To eradicate sexual violence, we must address the structural homophobia that isolates queer, transgender, and non-binary students from feeling supported by support campaigns that center cis-gender, heterosexual women.

To eradicate sexual violence, we must challenge the ableism in our prevention and bystander campaigns that erase

disabled survivors and at times, physically bar them from support.

To eradicate sexual violence, we must understand our collective role in maintaining these power structures and work to dismantle them.

As Linder says in the closing of this book, we must all have the courage to combat sexual violence, even if it will not be easy.

We each have the opportunity to reframe and restructure the power systems on our campuses and in our communities, and it begins with believing all survivors.

I invite you to take this journey with me as we fight for a future with no more “metoo”s.

**Andrea L. Pino**

Author, *We Believe You: Survivors of Campus  
Sexual Assault Speak Out*  
Washington, D.C.