

Middlebury: Where White Supremacists, but Not Survivors, Are Worthy of Free Speech

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Since its founding in 2012, It Happens Here has provided an anonymous storytelling platform to highlight survivors' voices. As we have engaged in this work, we have also acknowledged that survivors don't owe anyone their stories, and that sharing one's experiences with sexual violence can come at a high personal cost.

As the former and current leadership of It Happens Here at Middlebury, we're writing this letter to stand in solidarity with Elizabeth Dunn and condemn the recent actions of Middlebury's Judicial Affairs Office, as were discussed in the recent article "Student Accuses Over 30 Men of Sexual Misconduct on Facebook." Liz's actions do not stand in isolation, but follow in the footsteps of the #weknowwhatyoudid campaign at Morehouse and other institutions of higher education. By sharing the names of campus perpetrators, Liz did what is desperately needed; they highlighted that while campus survivors are often hypervisible, those who repeatedly and systematically violate boundaries (read: perpetrators) maintain an all-too-comfortable invisibility. Long before terms like "the whisper network" emerged, it has been important for people (and for women and queer folks in particular) to share information about sexual predators to protect each other. We were collectively horrified to learn from Liz that the Judicial Affairs Office has threatened to move forward with disciplinary action against them, and that, according to Liz, they are demanding that Liz share the names of the survivors who confided in them. It is perhaps worth mentioning here that as a student, Liz is not a mandatory reporter under Middlebury's Policy Against Sexual Misconduct, Domestic and Dating Violence, and Stalking.

The interconnectedness of this recent incident and the events that followed in the wake of white supremacist Charles Murray's visit to campus cannot be understated. In both instances, the Judicial Affairs Office threatened disciplinary actions upon women of color, which effectively punished them for exercising their freedom of speech against those who maintain power and privilege. In the case involving Addis Fouche-Channer, such accusations amounted to racial profiling. Indeed, the lines between the Judicial Affairs Office and the Communications Office are becoming increasingly blurred as the administration consistently (and visibly) panders to donors and alumni by being "tough on crime" and shutting down negative perceptions of Middlebury.

At It Happens Here, we have always (and will continue to) stand in awe of survivor-activists like Elizabeth Dunn. We're encouraging alumni and parents who are similarly horrified by the treatment of Addis Fouche-Channer, Elizabeth Dunn and others to call the Office of Advancement and let them know that you won't be donating to Middlebury College until the Judicial Affairs Office reforms what we consider the overpolicing of women of color (and of black women in particular) and corrects actions that support white supremacy and rape. The Office of Advancement can be reached at (802) 443-5217 or via email at supportmiddlebury@middlebury.edu.