

The Middlebury Campus - November 3, 1989 - Editorial

NOTE: Date on the print version is wrong

Weaving Tangled Webs

Our greatest regret in pursuing the sexual harassment story is that the Middlebury College administration played no role in bringing the issue to light. Interestingly, though, it was that very fact which became the axis on which our investigation revolved. The story took on much greater dimensions than we could have imagined. No longer was it what we believed it would be: a two dimensional story in which the good guys were clearly distinguished from the bad.

As we investigated—the more we talked to people involved as well as those on the peripheries—we realized the real story lay not in one individual's actions, but in the institution's reaction.

It was the responsibility of the administration, when it discovered a flaw in the relationship between a sovereign and students, to remedy the situation and prevent it from happening again. When a person believes himself or herself to be the victim of sexual harassment, the first inclination usually is not to reveal what has happened. Unfortunately, admission is the primary step towards ensuring that the same thing does not happen to someone else in the future. When that person chooses to remain silent, he or she indirectly chooses not to take a step towards future prevention.

In the same manner, an institution that is concerned that its members know they are protected by the procedures of that institution must acknowledge when its procedures work, if indeed they do.

When Middlebury College participated in a collusion to conceal the events surrounding Paul Cubeta's retirement, it was not sending out the message that it was confident in its ability to remedy the situation. When the college did not take the initiative from the outset last fall—or before—it only delayed, and perhaps inhibited the surfacing of the issue. Not only could the college community have learned from the experiences of the individuals involved (while

remaining ignorant of those individuals' identities), but trust in the college's ability to protect could only have been enhanced.

The Justice Department investigation, the tuition protest, the DU incident, John Zaccaro. Middlebury College has been no stranger to bad publicity in the recent past. It would be terrible to think that the most recent example of information withheld from people who have the right to know is an effort to stay off the six o'clock news. Olin Robison insists that "Middlebury College will not fall behind." To think that the administration would protect the reputation of this school before protecting its members is frightening. We fear for an emerging trend.

Wendy Bagwell

Paul Gould