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## [Our homegrown pro-rape culture is out and proud – from Steubenville to the expiration of VAWA](#)

By: [Pam Spaulding](#) Sunday January 6, 2013 7:03 am

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The coverage of the brutal crimes unveiling the pro-rape culture in India (and the women’s movement rising to oppose it), is welcome information to bring to Americans. While I’m sure a lot of people would like to think a gang-rape and beating on a bus is something so violent and savage that it couldn’t occur here, we need a reminder, that in the United States, some of our young men are being raised to believe that they can indeed take a woman of any age and use her as a personal sex toy, a piece of refuse to violate at will, with tacit approval by people in purported leadership roles in society.

Take the horrific events unfolding in Steubenville, Ohio as members of its heralded High School football team face rape charges — a gang-bang assault on an underage girl, allegedly caught on video and photos, and [the reaction by the community and law enforcement](#). In August, as teenagers gathered to drink and kick off another school year in anticipation of football season events occurred that now have this down-and-out town in the media and cultural spotlight. [NYT](#):

“Huge party!!! Banger!!!!” Trent Mays, a sophomore quarterback on Steubenville’s team, posted on Twitter, referring to one of the bashes that evening.

By sunrise, though, some people in and around Steubenville had gotten word that the night of fun on Aug. 11 might have taken a grim turn, and that members of the Steubenville High football team might have been involved. Twitter posts, videos and photographs circulated by some who attended the nightlong set of parties suggested that an unconscious girl had been sexually assaulted over several hours while others watched. She even might have been urinated on.

In one photograph posted on Instagram by a Steubenville High football player, the girl, who was from across the Ohio River in Weirton, W.Va., is shown looking unresponsive as two boys carry her by her wrists and ankles. Twitter users wrote the words “rape” and “drunk girl” in their posts.

Rumors of a possible crime spread, and people, often with little reliable information, quickly took sides. Some residents and others on social media blamed the girl, saying she put the football team in a bad light and put herself in a position to be violated. Others supported the girl, saying she was a victim of what they believed was a hero-worshipping culture built around football players who think they can do no wrong.

On Aug. 22, the possible crime made local news when the police came forward with details: two standout Steubenville football players — Mays, 16, from Bloomingdale, Ohio, and Ma’lik Richmond, 16, from Steubenville — were arrested and later charged with raping a 16-year-old girl and kidnapping her by taking her to several parties while she was too drunk to resist.

A timeline of the events [can be found on BuzzFeed](#).

The wagons are indeed circling. Steubenville Police Chief William McCafferty, is perturbed about the reaction around the country from the impression that “Big Red” players have been allowed to get away with crimes because of their local celebrity as lions on the field. From his point of view, if there are crimes going on, they are not being reported. Well, if this victim isn’t being believed by some in this case, I think the social pressure to avoid going to the police about lesser evils is quite simple to understand.

The town is, however, savvy enough to know it needs damage control. A [web site](#) sponsored by Steubenville city and police officials has been put up to “reassure” outsiders that the city is not run by its testosterone-driven miscreant football players.

“When people are saying that our police department did not follow procedure, that the football team runs the city, that is not the case,” Davison said. “They went by the book. Everything was handled in an above-board fashion to make sure that the case can benefit from the fullest extent of the law.”

Intended to sort fact from fiction, the website has the appearance of a legal briefing, with black type on a white background, providing an intentional departure from escalating emotions over the case and how it’s been handled. It provides a timeline of the case, summaries of Ohio laws that affect sex charges, online posts and reaction to them and a pledge of transparency.

Cover Your @ss, anyone? There’s hardly a need when events like this reinforce the social pressure that women who are raped have to face not only he-said/she-said humiliations in many cases, but a system that offers up jaw-dropping “justice” for the rapist. From the Golden State — [a rapist goes free because the victim wasn’t married](#):

A California appeals court overturned the rape conviction of a man accused of pretending to be a woman’s boyfriend when he snuck into her bedroom and had sex with her, concluding that the law doesn’t protect unmarried women in such cases.

Citing an obscure state law from 1872, the panel ruled that an impersonator who tricks someone into having sex with him can only be found guilty of rape if he is pretending to be a married woman's husband.

“Has the man committed rape? Because of historical anomalies in the law and the statutory definition of rape, the answer is no, even though, if the woman had been married and the man had impersonated her husband, the answer would be yes,” Judge Thomas L. Willhite Jr. wrote in the court's decision.

At the federal level, the going is just as tough these days. Women are getting the shaft from the conservatives on the Hill who are so incensed that the re-up of the Violence Against Women Act was to be expanded to protect LGBTs and women raped on Indian reservations that they [let it expire](#). Rep. Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) summed it up well:

“The fact that the 112th Congress let VAWA expire doesn't just mean that they're politically opposed to some of the [proposed] expansions,” Sinema said. “It means women all across this country — right now, today — are living without these legal protections.” House Republicans refused to take up a new version of the legislation this week, citing opposition to the expanded protections for Native American, LGBT and undocumented immigrant women offered in the version that passed in the Senate. The influx of women in the newest Congress, Sinema said, would provide an opportunity to build the kind of coalition needed to renew the law. “The truth is, there's not a single piece of partisan ideology in that legislation,” she said. “There is nothing ideological about it. All women deserve protection from abuse, and that's all this legislation says.”

“It's also troubling, Sinema said, that Cantor and Sessions say they support protecting women while opposing the idea of granting more women legal protection. “Then you're saying some women are better than other women,” she said. “The reality is that a woman who is being raped or sexually assaulted is a woman. Period. Whether she's a tourist from France, whether she's an undocumented person who is being abused by her boyfriend, or whether she happens to be a person who lives on tribal land.”

An aside — Conservatives *really* need to stay away from the use of the word “rape.” The latest grotesque misuse of the word comes from the [piehole of Faux News commentator Charles Krauthammer](#), referring to the debacle over Sandy relief bill:

“I think what Boehner did in postponing the vote until today was absolutely right,” he said on “Special Report.” “**That was a rape of the Treasury.** \$60 billion, including a ton of pork. The part that was essential that passed today was to replenish the flood insurance. That's right, and the rest ought to be debated in regular order.”

So, the war on women continues, with our eyes closed from the local level to the federal level to the fact that a not-insignificant slice of America really does believe that women are 1) a threat to male supremacy, 2) participants in society with fewer rights to their own autonomy, and 3) must be raised from birth to understand that place, and boys are raised to feel entitled to disrespect women. It's still there. What are we going to do about it. The problem begins at home.

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