

Responses to sexual assault analyzed

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A panel of law enforcement professionals and advocates, featuring Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney of New York's 12th district, addressed the issue of sexual assault on college campuses during an NYU Law-sponsored panel on Oct. 21 at the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute.

The panelists also included Special Commissioner of Investigation for New York City Public Schools Richard Condon, NYU Law professor Martin Guggenheim, Day One New York executive director Stephanie Nilva, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law professor Marci Hamilton and Virginia Commonwealth University professor Charol Shakeshaft.

Judge Leslie Crocker Snyder, founder of the first Sex Crimes Prosecution Bureau in the country and co-author of New York State's Rape Shield Law, moderated the event and gave an overview of the challenges facing sexual assault prosecution.

"Rape is a crime of violence, of power, of control, degradation, humiliation," Snyder said. "We still have trouble in the court rooms convincing juries that someone didn't ask for it."

Maloney was the keynote speaker, and she discussed the mismanagement of sexual abuse crime enforcement in the U.S.

"It seems a week does not go by where a sexual report has not been mismanaged," Maloney said. "A mismanaged case is a stain on our justice system."

Other issues the panel discussed include the pressures facing victims of sexual abuse and of a legal and cultural system that favors the perpetrator. Hamilton said that one of the major challenges posed by sexual assault is that the victims often have trouble reporting the crimes.

"We know based on data that most victims are unable to come forward until later in their adult years," Hamilton said. "We have unwittingly set up a system that favors the predators and disfavors the victim."

The panel also discussed how new technology has created new problems in detecting and preventing sexual abuse cases in schools, which Condon said were a major challenge in prosecuting these crimes.

"If a student has his own cell phone," said Condon, "[Parents] never look and see what calls are going in at 3 a.m. — they're the biggest pain to our cases."

Nilva spoke about her teen dating violence organization, Day One, and said they had found educating people at a young age to be one of the most effective measures to combat sexual assault.

"The acceptance by peers of abusive behavior is one of the strongest indicators of dating violence," Nilva said. "Introducing education of any kind addressing intimate partner violence will reduce dating violence."



CAS sophomore Katie Schulz, who attended the event, said she was surprised to learn about the statistics involving sexual assault.

“I was shocked to find out the high incident level of sexual assault in high schools, as well as the extremely small statute of limitations,” Schulz said. “It was interesting to see how these panelists are working to make positive change.

Steinhardt senior Haley Spenard said she felt not enough is being done in schools to prevent sexual abuse.

“As far as NYU goes, I don’t think the school is doing enough to tackle the issue,” Spenard said. “I mean, I heard about this event through my internship, not through school.”

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