



Men Stopping Violence

*Working together for a change.*

## College and Rape Culture: The 'Unbelievable' and the 'Commonplace'

by Men Stopping Violence

A man at Georgia Tech, a leader in the Phi Kappa Tau fraternity, recently [wrote and distributed](#) an email titled "In luring your rapebait." It pressures pledges to have sex with women and provides detailed directions on targeting, wearing down and disposing of women.

The message is clear, achieve sexual conquest with women, as many as possible, or else "YOU ARE OUTTA HERE!" He makes women, and the possibility that they may be degraded or injured by such tactics, invisible.

Responses to this email range from utter disbelief and disgust to "Boys will be boys." Both perspectives feel true precisely because rape culture is outrageous and commonplace.

Concluding this story by punishing and isolating this student and this fraternity will not solve the problem. That approach leaves rape culture, and how we participate in it, unexamined and unchallenged.

When men treat women as objects of sexual conquest, and see that conquest as essential to proving manhood, rape culture gets worse. Here, women are reduced to prey in the hunt for male sexual gratification. It is the only reason men can imagine that women come to their parties.

Some community commentary points out that the email expressly advised "NO RAPE." Isn't that enough? Hardly. It actually obscures the distinction between sexual assault and rape, and grooms men to practice both.

For example, the email offers step-by-step instructions on how to control and touch a woman's body while dancing, and to interpret her consent to dancing as consent to being groped. Any one of these "instructions" (too graphic to print here) would constitute sexual assault if unwanted. These instructions on sexual assault illuminate another belief about manhood: that men have a right to access women's bodies on demand.

The email also dangerously misconstrues consent by equating "signals" such as putting hair behind an ear, being at the party, dancing, or accepting a drink as consent for men to "escalate." And if pressuring, shaming, manipulation, and physical aggression don't work, it instructs men "to go get more alcohol." The messages are clear -- do what it takes, "maximize your pleasure," she's asking for it.

We know that rape culture extends beyond individuals, fraternities, and Georgia Tech because (a) one in four women on college campuses report being raped and (b) one in three college men in one survey reported that they would rape if they could get away with it.

So, rather than consigning this episode to one isolated event, it should prompt us to examine how we keep rape culture alive. This is not a problem of monsters; it is a problem of masculinity. Our examination should lead us to ask how administrators, faculty, alumni, students and community can be held accountable to prevent sexual violence on and off campus.

At Men Stopping Violence, we provide education and training to engage men in ending violence against women. We know that violence against women is learned (this email shows how it is taught) and it can be unlearned if men are willing to hold themselves and each other accountable. Our prevention programs teach about how to be a man in ways that do not involve abusing girls and women.

With such knowledge and understanding, we as a community can discuss these issues differently. Talking about this incident can help us see connections to sexual violence in the military, our families, the workplace, and on the streets. Together we can amplify the work of breaking down rape culture and build safer communities for women, girls, boys and men.