9-20-1983

Accused by origin

Barney Berube
University of Maine

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/social_justice

Part of the Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons, Higher Education Commons, and the United States History Commons

Repository Citation

This Letter to the Editor is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Social Justice: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.
Accused by origin

To the editor:

The subject of rape for a lead story in the Maine Campus makes for titillating talk and gossip. That seems universal. Why shouldn’t the Maine Campus cash in on this human frailty? Other papers indulge in this kind of reportage gratuitously. That’s only one of the curiously sad aspects of the Maine Campus indulgences. Rape is indeed a most serious offense and must be treated by all (press included) with the greatest delicacy and, above all--certainty--that no one is ultimately harmed by a grossly unjust accusation. The Maine Campus went only half-way. Our judicial system by contrast supports the innocence of the accused until proven otherwise.

The Maine Campus’ major insensitivity is to the potentially real victim it has already named--the one who is innocent until/unless proven otherwise. His is not a name like Smith of Sullivan. The Campus wants its readers to base their initial verdict of the accused on the basis of national origin; it does this at the outset. After all, when has a newspaper printed a lead indentifying a rapist as Anglo or Irish--or even white? I’ve certainly never heard of a Lao person committing rape--nay, not one in the 2,000 Southeast Asians in Maine to date. Frankly, I seriously doubt the person in question is at all guilty of anything other than a mere lovers’ squabble. But be that as it may--his likely exoneration remains in the hand of our judicial system--and not in the press.

This case will hopefully prove that the innocent will be freed, though the damage is already irreparable to both the accused and to the race he proudly belongs to. As the story has it, this couple has had an ongoing relationship; the girl was in a boys’ dorm several hours after bedtime; reports rape several hours later--and no one within earshot (10 feet away or less) heard her cry “rape” at the time of the alleged incident. Far too much is suspect here.

It is my view that the Campus may save space now for a lead story where the unnamed victim will be this Lao student, and the woman seeking this cruel vengeance may well next become the defendant. Justice is justice.

Barney Berube
267 Estabrooke