



Campus Sex Assaults: A Year-Long Investigation of Midwestern Colleges

Chicago Tribune Staff

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In September 2010, St. Mary's College freshman Elizabeth "Lizzy" Seeberg was found dead, a victim of an apparent suicide from prescription medication, mere days after alleging she had been sexually attacked by a Notre Dame football player. Starting in November of that year, the *Chicago Tribune* began reporting on this case that was up until that point not publicly acknowledged by the University of Notre Dame. Over the course of the next year, *Tribune* journalists and investigators produced a series of articles focusing on this case—and the cases of other sexual assault victims on Midwestern university campuses, leading to new investigations and subsequent reforms at schools across the region.

Campus Sexual Assaults is a gripping and important piece of investigative journalism, revealing disturbing primary materials from cases and shocking personal interviews with the victims. The yearlong investigation shed light on the antiquated and obfuscated reporting and prosecuting practices of major Midwest colleges and universities, going so far as to discover that Notre Dame campus authorities did not even promptly investigate the alleged assault that occurred days before Lizzy Seeberg's death. *Campus Sexual Assaults* goes on to investigate similar trends in under-reporting and under-prosecuting sexual assaults on campuses across the country.

Part 1 of *Campus Sexual Assaults* reports on the Seeberg case as it unfolded, and ends with the county prosecutor's decision that there would be no charges, since the victim's death made her statements inadmissible in court. Part 2 has a wider focus, as the *Tribune* reports on another similar attack at Notre Dame and a survey finding that few people accused of sexual violence on college campuses are ever convicted. Part 3 deals with reforms at Notre Dame and similar problems at Marquette University.

The powerful stories told in *Campus Sexual Assaults* by the survivors and families victimized by these attacks are moving as much as they can be upsetting. After months of reporting and research on the Seeberg case and others like it, the *Tribune*'s investigations sparked new legal investigations and subsequent reforms at the campuses in question. This collection of articles and investigative reports is a touching, in-depth look at an endemic problem at universities across America and should be required reading for not only campus and sexual health educators, but for university audiences and concerned readers everywhere.

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