Censored by Silence:
Sexual Assault on Berea’s Campus

Just because this is an exceptional school doesn’t mean it's an exception.
"that pill’s a panty-dropper"
"Berea needs a brothel"
"you should always go for the girl with daddy issues"
"do you think you can use female Viagra as a date rape drug?"
"the cops can’t really do anything for this situation so reporting it to them probably won’t help"
"don’t walk alone at night – that was her first mistake."
"it’s not rape because guys are always down for sex."
"you were into it a minute ago."
"nobody’s gonna believe you"
"the victim placed herself in a position to be harmed and did not take action to prevent her injuries."

Consent is absolutely 100% mandatory. It can only be given willingly. A Yes given under pressure is not consent. Anything besides an enthusiastic and freely given Yes is not consent. A No is not the start of a negotiation over an individual’s body. No does not require explanation or apologies. It stands on its own. No.
Berea's reporting procedures are confusing and complicated. In the past, college officials haven't exactly been clear about what the process is, even to people reporting these crimes to them. The college has new mandates that are streamlining the process, involving the Title IX director regardless of whom the report is given to. Hopefully the procedures and their execution becomes more transparent for students and educates them as well. But beyond the formal side of this, the reality of sexual assault on our campus needs to be brought out into the open. This comes from open and honest conversation about what sexual assault is. It should not be a taboo subject. Keeping it hidden only allows it to continue.

We make jokes about upperclassmen guys preying on freshman girls and there are even rumors about the baseball team making bets on who can sleep with the most freshmen girls this year. We don't talk about sexual assault because a lot of us don't think it happens on our own campus. That's a problem that other schools deal with, not us. We're a small community and one may think that means sexual assault really doesn't happen here. In reality, that only stifles the discussion of these issues not their actual existence. Sexual assault is actually one of the most under-reported crimes, and that's often due to the stigma that comes with being a victim and the fear of being outed as one. Small communities like Berea's exacerbate this issue.

So many of us don't actually know what actual consent is. A lot of us don't know how to name sexual assault even when it happens to us personally.
A clinical definition:

"Sexual assault is any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient. Falling under the definition of sexual assault are sexual activities as forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, child molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape."

Then there's sexual harassment: unwanted sexual advances or obscene remarks. This can be as simple as leering at someone's body or making inappropriate remarks about their appearance, making them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. You're ignoring their personal boundaries and forcing your own onto them. You don't want someone to hold you hostage and force feed you religion of political agendas so why would you want to make someone feel uncomfortable with your own behavior?

Stop silencing victims. Start talking about the issues!
DON'T BE A PASSIVE Bystander

Be the change.