

Editor
York Dispatch
York Sunday News
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York, PA 17401-2807

July 31, 2003

Dear Editor:

As a longtime York resident and executive director of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, I feel compelled to respond to Paul Campos's editorial of July 27, "Rape Convictions Leave Reason for Doubts."

Mr. Campos complained about men being "routinely convicted" of rape in "he said, she said" situations. Don't kid yourself. Men are not "routinely convicted of rape" in ANY courtroom situation. The extreme difficulty of successfully prosecuting a rape case is one of the barriers that keeps more rape victims from coming forward – only about one in three even report the crime, and it isn't hard to guess why. Look at what has happened to Kobe Bryant's accuser. To a lesser extent, this kind of public scrutiny and ridicule is what any sexual assault victim faces.

Furthermore, no rape conviction truly comes down to "he-said, she-said." Criminal charges must be filed by a district attorney who believes he or she has enough evidence to win a conviction, and the case must be strong enough to convince 12 people that the accused is guilty. As for your complaint about juries believing women over men in particular cases, I'd like to point out that witness credibility is an important, legitimate factor for juries to consider in reaching verdicts. Apparently, the juries in the cases you cited found the victim to be more credible than the perpetrator.

Studies indicate that false accusations of sexual assault are rare, and I invite you to ask yourself: Would *you* undergo an hours-long, extremely invasive forensic exam, rigorous questioning by police and lawyers, months or even years of disruption to your life, and exposure to the prying eyes and judgments of the public for the sake of – what? Needling an ex-lover? These ordeals are what most rape victims endure on the road to seeking convictions of their attackers.

As for Kobe Bryant, neither you nor anyone else yet knows what evidence will be presented at trial. What we do know is that the district attorney prosecuting the case, after careful consideration, determined that he had enough evidence to successfully try Mr. Bryant for rape.

I agree that no person should be wrongly convicted of rape. But the next time you take the time to write an opinion about sexual assault, perhaps you should focus on the problems that are so undisputedly real and pervasive in our culture: The fact that one in five children is sexually assaulted by age 18, that most victims are too ashamed or traumatized to report the crime, and that for far too long, too many victims have gone voiceless, and powerless to seek justice.

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