

# Know Your Enemy

BY KATHRYN PHILLIPS

U. OF IOWA

PHOTO BY EDWARD MARAVILLA,  
CALIFORNIA STATE U., CHICO

REBECCA\* NEVER THOUGHT OF herself as a statistic. As a U. of Iowa sophomore, she saw the campus signs. Splashed in bright pink, they warned the largest group of potential rape victims — women between the age of 16 and 24 — that every 1.3 seconds, a woman in America is raped.

"I switched the signs around and read only 'American women,'" Rebecca, now a junior, says. "I thought it couldn't happen to me because I'm African."

But Rebecca found out race couldn't protect her. She was sexually assaulted during finals week by a man she trusted, a teaching assistant she volunteered with at the UI International Center.

## "I knew I had been wronged."

"I always thought they jumped you on the street," Rebecca says. "He just invited me over at noon for lunch. Once the door closed, he totally changed. He said I knew it was coming. I didn't. It was crazy."

The man pinned her down on the floor, and Rebecca struggled and pleaded with him to stop. Before he got her skirt off, she escaped and locked herself in the bathroom. The man calmed down after 45



Most rapes are committed by someone the victim knows.

minutes, and they took the same bus back to campus.

"I went home and went straight to bed. I felt like I had just run a marathon, but I wasn't sweating and I wasn't breathing hard. I was just extremely tired. I knew I had been wronged."

The man warned her not to tell, but unlike the majority of victims, Rebecca filed attempted rape charges against her assailant and won.

Of the 500,000 women who report rape and attempted rape every year, only 16 percent of women report it to police, and even fewer press charges. Over 80 percent know their attackers. Many rapes occur on college campuses because students are at a prime dating age. But as reported

rapes increase, the number of women prosecuting their assailants remains proportionately low.

"Most women don't press charges because they don't want to embarrass their families, or they think it's their own fault," says M. Denise Fraser-Vaselakos, a clinical psychologist and expert on women's issues. "If someone were to break into a woman's apartment and burglarize it, she wouldn't be embarrassed to file charges. But the prosecution rate is so poor [for rape trials]. It takes too much to get through it."

## "I felt it was my fault."

As a sophomore at Ohio U., Katie was raped by a basketball player who had been reported for assaulting another woman one year before.

"It wasn't a big fight," she says. "I said no. He started to take my clothes off. I didn't struggle. I just lay there. I finally realized what he was doing to me. I said no, take it out. He didn't. I didn't fight him, and that's what makes me angry."

Katie, now a junior at the U. of Cincinnati, chose to leave OU rather than press charges. She was confused and ashamed, and she felt guilty for being raped because she had been drinking.

"I felt it was my fault because I was drunk and I should've known better. I asked myself why I didn't do anything, why I let it happen."

Alcohol influences 75 percent of male aggressors, and 55 percent of women involved in rapes are reported to have used alcohol or other drugs before the attack. Although drinking may lead to sex in some instances, Fraser-Vaselakos says using drunkenness to blame women for being raped is demeaning to men.

"Using drinking as an excuse is treating men like idiots," she says. "[Rape] isn't a reflex. It's not like hitting a knee with a rubber hammer. Saying that a woman who is drunk is responsible implies the poor guy had nothing better, no other choice, than to rape her. In fact, many men can be with a woman in that situation and they don't make the decision to rape."

## "When they were finished, they threw my clothes at me."

Jamie was a freshman when she got really drunk and left a dance party at Augustana College, Ill., with two men. She was invited to go back to a smaller party at their friend's dorm.

"Since there were two of them, I felt secure," she says. "But when we got to their friend's room, they started taking my clothes off. One put me on the bed and started having sex with me. I said, 'Hold it, stop, wait....' They changed places a lot. When they were finished, they threw my clothes at me and drove me back to the [party]. I never saw them again."

Rapes that involve more than one attacker make up 16 percent of committed rapes and 10 percent of attempted rapes. Jamie, now a sophomore, talks about her experience openly and graphically.

"It is important to me that people know," she says. "Women impose this cloak of silence on themselves, a silence that society reinforces, and it lets men do this to them. I'm not ashamed. I say I'm a victim because those people did it to me. It has nothing to do with me."

*\*Last names have been withheld.*

Kathryn Phillips, Viewpoints editor at The Daily Iowan, dedicates this story to Spencer, for giving her her muse.

When rape takes on a familiar face, women find it even tougher to be believed

## The Men's Side

Many men are confused. About women, at least. Especially when it comes to sex. "There is a huge gray area," says Eric Cox, a grad student at Indiana U. "We don't act like robots. We don't ask to hold hands. We don't ask to spend the night. Things just happen. There is no verbal communication. Women put themselves in precarious positions. They have to give clear signals."

This miscommunication can lead to date rape, or forcible sex by someone a victim knows. Some estimate that more than one college woman is raped every day.

One major contributor to rape is consumption of alcohol. When inhibitions are down and beer goggles are in full force, some men don't think they're to blame if they misinterpret what a woman wants.

"If a guy feeds drinks to a girl all night — if he's sober and she's intoxicated — her share of the blame goes down," says Eric Lawrence, a junior at West Virginia U. "But if she puts herself in that situation, she has to be aware of what could happen."

The only way these men think rape will stop is if signals are crystal clear, says Chris Pena, a senior at the U. of Houston. "There needs to be a verbal agreement," Pena says. "Even if it's just a quick 'Do you want to — yes,' or 'Do you want to — no.'"

Kathryn Phillips, U. of Iowa

## The Date Rape Drug

On the street, users call the little white pills "roofies." On campus, they're calling it the forgetting pill, or, quite simply, the date rape drug of choice.

The drug, Rohypnol, is described as a sedative 10 times more powerful than Valium, and reports of its use in sexual battery cases are popping up across the South. Victims reportedly ingest the pill unknowingly — usually dissolved in a drink — and experience anything from nausea and dizziness to complete memory loss.

Roofies sedate users quickly — within 15 to 30 minutes of ingestion — and last about eight hours. Perhaps the greatest danger the drug poses is the temporary amnesia for most of the sedation period. Law enforcement officers say a fuzzy or nonexistent memory of a sexual encounter is difficult, if not impossible, to prosecute.

Although it is not approved for use in the United States, Rohypnol is a legal prescription drug in parts of Europe and Latin America. Illegal use of the drug was first reported in Florida in 1994, but sexual assault cases involving the pill are springing up in southern California, as well.

By Colleen Rush, Assistant Editor