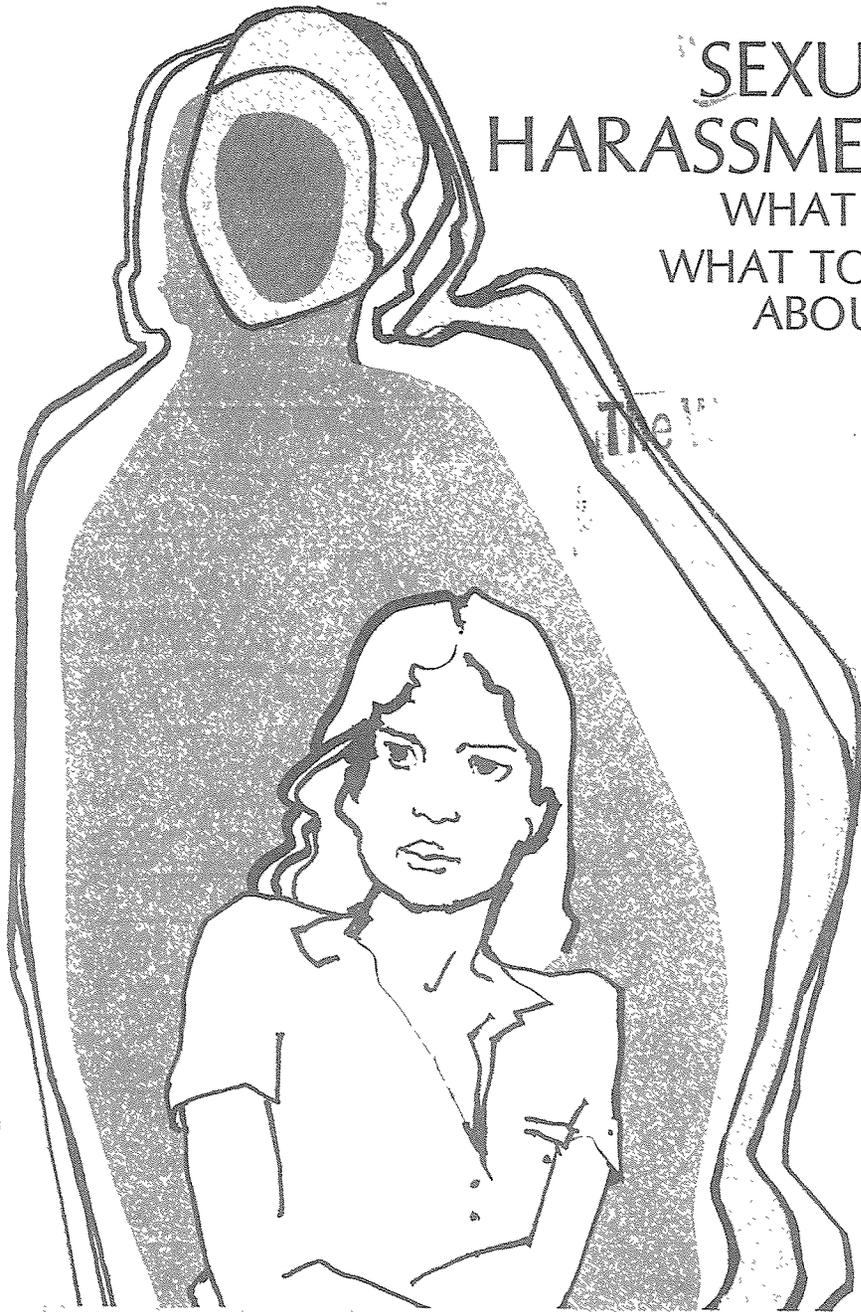


OCT 23 1980

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

WHAT IT IS
WHAT TO DO
ABOUT IT



WOMEN ORGANIZED AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Violence + Sexual Exploit. -
Sexual Har.

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WOMEN ORGANIZED AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT

A SUPPORT/ADVICE GROUP FOR WOMEN

Women Organized Against Sexual Harassment (WOASH) is an organization of U.C. Berkeley undergraduates and graduate students committed to investigating, confronting and ending sexual harassment on the Berkeley campus. We serve as a support/advice group for women who've been harassed and as advocates for women who want to pursue a complaint. We urge women to report old and new instances of harassment to us and offer complete confidentiality.

If you have a complaint, or if you want to get involved in WOASH's work, please leave us a note in our mailbox in 300 Eshleman Hall, or a telephone message at ~~845-7273 (Bay Area Women Against Rape)~~.

642-6912 Student Advocate / W.O.A.S.H.

'HE INVITED ME TO MEET HIM . . .

"...After the quarter was over, he invited me by phone to meet him at a coffee shop, presumably to discuss the paper. Perhaps I was being overly naive, but I was surprised when he did not even bring the paper with him. He proceeded to make various crudely obvious sexual propositions: inviting me to 'experiment sexually' with him and to go over that night to his home for dinner."

(A woman student recently harassed by a U.C. Berkeley professor)

'I COULD LOSE MY JOB . . .



K. is a thirty-five year old woman who works as a clerk/typist on campus. She has only recently acquired the job after months of searching, having been told that she lacks the credentials for a higher-level job. She hopes that this job will prepare her for career advancement.

K. has discovered that one of the conditions for the job is that she accept a boss' "interest" in her. "He compliments me on my appearance, makes endless sexual jokes and references, and touches my arms and back during conversations." K. feels angry and upset at this man's advances and would like to confront him and bring a stop to his behavior. Yet she fears the loss of her job and the possibility that she will earn a name as a troublemaker or destroy her possibilities for advancement.

WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

The kind of sexual harassment that Women Organized Against Sexual Harassment (WOASH) is fighting occurs when men in positions of authority try to use their power in making coercive sexual advances toward women. This harassment may take the form of subtle pressure, sexual remarks, staring and leering, touching, demands for sexual favors, threats, or actual physical assault. The term has also been used to refer to any imposition of unwanted sexual advances on women—for example, by men on the street. But situations where the man has institutional power over the woman have become the focus of concern for women students and workers because a refusal on their part can be met with reprisals affecting their careers.

In an academic setting, faculty can threaten women's career goals and future economic livelihood with lowered grades, poor recommendations, the denial of research opportunities, or academic failure. On the job, superiors can threaten women's career goals and current livelihood with poor evaluations, denial of promotions or merit increases, departmental transfers, or outright dismissals.

Even if there are no direct reprisals, the anxiety and distress that victims of sexual harassment experience often cause them to leave their jobs; or in the case of students, to drop courses, change majors, or drop out of school.

Sexual harassment also limits the victim's willingness to consult or work with professors or bosses. Women are angered and humiliated by the violation of the student-teacher or employer-employee relationship. The experience is often devastating to their self-esteem, as well as their livelihood.

WHY DO WE CONSIDER SEXUAL HARASSMENT AN ISSUE OF SEX DISCRIMINATION?

Because most professors and managers are male, most targets of harassment are female. Sexual harassment of women is not just a matter of misconduct or individual abuse of power. It is part of a widespread and systematic social pattern by which women are kept subordinate to men. It is one very important way in which women are denied equal respect, equal consideration, and equal opportunity as workers and students. Women want the same educational and job opportunities as men. We want to be taken seriously vocationally and academically and not be reduced to sex objects.

WHO HARRASSES AND WHO IS HARASSED?

Men of all backgrounds, races, and classes can be harassers. However, white men are more likely to be in secure positions of authority, and can more often harass women with impunity. A survey at U C Berkeley by Donna Benson (1978) confirms that the category of teachers most involved in harassment incidents (62 percent) was tenured professors. Ninety-four percent of tenured faculty at Berkeley are white. Any effective program to stop sexual harassment must uncover this institutionally protected abuse.

Women of any race, class, and background can be subjected to sexual harassment. However, Third World women and those in lower-level jobs are especially vulnerable to harassment, given their lack of economic security and institutional support (which are magnified by racism). They may be particularly reluctant to confront their harassers or appeal to authorities in the fear that their charges will not be taken seriously or that they will lose their jobs.

HOW WIDESPREAD IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT BERKELEY?

In the survey conducted by Donna Benson, 20 percent of the U C Berkeley seniors sampled had been harassed—that is, almost one out of every five women surveyed! Over a third of the sample knew someone who had been harassed. The possibility of reprisals is also very real. A full 25 percent of the women who experienced harassment reported reprisals.

WHY CAN'T WOMEN JUST SAY "NO"?

One reason that women feel they can't say no is that professors and bosses have the power to fire them, give them poor recommendations, lower their grades, and restrict their access to their major or their career. Women also depend on professors and managers for information, training, support, and assistance. It's difficult to tell off someone who has power over you and your future, and who controls important resources to which you need access. Furthermore, harassers often will not take "no" for an answer, persisting in their advances despite the woman's best efforts to discourage them.

Most women who experience harassment feel confused and embarrassed and react by seeking to escape the situation and avoiding contact with the harasser. In their powerlessness they may turn

legitimate anger into self-blame. Thus, a woman may not only be unable to say "no," but her fear and self-blame may force her into avoiding her teacher, class, or boss—perhaps force her into quitting school or her job altogether.

DON'T WOMEN "ASK FOR IT," LIKE IT, EVEN USE IT?

If sexual advances are not unwanted, we don't call them sexual harassment.

Women, as well as men, want to benefit from the vocational or academic interest and guidance of their superiors. If sexual interest is the only response they receive, some women will resign themselves to it. Suggesting that this injustice represents "asking for it" or even liking it represents nothing but contempt for women workers and students.

As to whether women use sex for academic or work privilege, Donna Benson's survey indicates that this is extremely rare. But in a society which refuses to take women seriously, some women learn to use sex to bargain for privilege. This is another facet of the same sexist social structure that produces the pattern of sexual harassment. But using sexuality in this way is not sexual harassment. Women students and workers have no authority or power with which to coerce their superiors into liaisons. Professors and bosses can easily say no without risk of reprisal.

ISN'T THERE STILL A "GRAY AREA"? CAN WE ALWAYS DETERMINE WHEN SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS TAKING PLACE?

Of course there is still a "gray area." The issue of personal relations between teachers and students or employers and employees is complex. We aren't trying to thoroughly legislate these relations. Nor can we agree on every item of behavior to categorize as "abuse of authority."

We can, however, agree upon some of the obligations which employers or professors have toward workers or students—obligations based on the authority, power, and privilege vested in the position of employer or professor vis-a-vis worker or student. Professors and employers must treat women students and workers with respect. Treating them as sexual objects through unwanted advances is sex discrimination and sexual harassment.

WHAT IS WOASH?

Women Organized Against Sexual Harassment is an organization of U.C. Berkeley undergraduates and graduate students committed to investigating, confronting, and ending sexual harassment on the Berkeley campus. Formed in November 1978, WOASH seeks to raise the consciousness of the campus community about the problem of sexual harassment and what can be done to eradicate it. We are working with the faculty and administration to create a fair and adequate grievance procedure for handling sexual harassment cases. We are also in contact with AFSCME 1695 and other staff representatives on the issue of sexual harassment of campus employees.

WOASH serves as a support/advice group for women who've been harassed and as advocates for women who want to pursue a complaint. We urge women to report old and new instances of harassment to us, even if they don't care to take further action. Any information about harassment incidents helps to take further action. Any information about harassment incidents helps us assess the problem, so that we can better assist other women. Our three-member Complaints Committee guarantees complete confidentiality to any woman who requests it. We are willing to keep any or all details of your case totally secret. Leave a message for WOASH Complaints Committee at ~~845-7273 (Bay Area Women Against Rape)~~, or write to us at 300 Eshleman Hall, A.S.U.C., U.C. Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720.



* 642-6912 Student Advocate / W.O.A.S.H. 5

WHAT DOES WOASH WANT FROM THE UNIVERSITY?

WOASH wants the university to take strong action and a strong public stance against sexual harassment. Faculty and employers must know it will not be tolerated, and students and workers must have real remedies available.

WOASH wants a procedure for registering and prosecuting complaints of sexual harassment which women will trust enough to come forward. While the rights of the accused must as always be fully protected, the nature of sexual harassment cases requires particular sensitivity to the vulnerable position of the complainant.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH EXISTING AVENUES FOR HANDLING CHARGES?

A woman student can currently bring a complaint of sexual harassment to the Chairperson of her department, the Ombudsperson, the Student Advocate, or an officer of the administration. The charge is then typically handled on an informal level through mediation by these individuals. The university has no student grievance procedure of any kind at this time. In the ad hoc private attempts to settle the matter, the woman may be expected to deal directly with the man who has harassed her, without formal protection against subsequent reprisals. Throughout, the woman is at the mercy of the individual to whom she has complained, who is not made accountable by any formal procedure or standards or justice. Most women we know of who tried these routes eventually gave up in discouragement.

Currently, to prosecute a charge of sexual harassment, a woman student must convince the administration to initiate a disciplinary hearing against the accused before the faculty (Academic Senate) Committee on Privilege and Tenure. WOASH finds this procedure inadequate for a number of reasons:

- 1) It is unlikely that individual women who are harassed would or could persuade the administration to initiate a hearing. It was only through the long-term, persistent and exhaustive efforts of a number of complainants and the women of WOASH that the first such sexual harassment case now has a chance of being heard. The official faculty code of conduct, moreover, makes no specific mention of the problem of sexual harassment.

2) The administration, if it decides to pursue a hearing, selects both the prosecutor and the advocate for the harassed women. The women serve only as witnesses, and do not have a say in who represents them and presents their case.

3) The Committee on Privilege and Tenure historically has served to protect the interests of the senior faculty against those of the administration in grievance cases. Rarely has this committee been used to hear and judge disciplinary charges brought against a faculty member.

4) The Committee consists of senior faculty, the overwhelming majority of whom are white males. Complainants have no voice in the composition of this hearing body, and its membership does not represent the varied perspectives or the balanced number of women and men which we consider essential to a fair hearing.

5) The process and results of the hearing are secret. The complainants are not even informed of the outcome!

6) The Committee on Privilege and Tenure is empowered to handle only the sanctioning aspect of a complaint; it cannot make restitution to the women (e.g. correcting a lowered grade). There is at this time no procedure whatsoever which can offer restitution to victims of sexual harassment.

7) The Committee has jurisdiction only over regular faculty members. Thus there is no procedure to handle harassment by lecturers, T.A.'s, readers or administrators.

For a woman university employee who is sexually harassed, the only current remedy is an informal administrative hearing in which the complaint is aired without reference to a specific code violation. Thus employees not only lack an adequate procedure, they do not even have the backing of a policy proscribing sexual harassment.

We need better grievance procedures to deal fairly and effectively with sexual harassment cases!

WHAT KIND OF GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE DOES WOASH WANT?

WOASH believes that the Committee on Privilege and Tenure is not the appropriate body to rule on sexual harassment cases. Therefore WOASH is presently working with others in the University community to enact a Title IX grievance procedure under which cases of sexual harassment, along with other forms of sex discrimination, would be heard. WOASH urges that the following provisions be incorporated into such a procedure:

The University should adopt a clear policy proscribing sexual harassment. The faculty code of conduct should be amended to this effect, and this policy should be publicized to the University community.

A grievance committee pool should be established. This pool would include students, faculty, staff, and administrators, self-appointed or nominated by the appropriate organizations. When a case goes to committee, the defendant and complainant would each select members from the pool to form the hearing body. The Title IX Coordinator would select the administrative representatives. The formal committee would have more student and faculty than administrators, a majority of women, and depending on the case a certain number of Third World or gay people.

The procedure could involve two levels of complaint, with the complainant deciding how far she wishes to pursue the matter. An initial attempt at informal resolution could be made, using committee members to investigate. If no resolution were reached, a formal board would be constituted. The complainant and defendant would be ensured of due process; the opportunity to call and cross-examine witnesses and present evidence, the right to an advocate to their own choosing at all stages of the procedure, to appeal, and access to all written documents related to the case. In all of its actions, the committee would be required to maintain confidentiality.

If the hearing body determined that a prima facie case existed, it would be empowered to recommend remedies and sanctions. However a case were resolved, the committee would have the responsibility to provide protections against reprisals. Members of the grievance committee may monitor the accused after the hearing. The

student would be able to drop a class, switch majors, or change advisors with active support from the committee.

WOASH also supports the development of an effective grievance procedure for campus employees and will work with staff representatives to secure their demands.



BEYOND A GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE.....

Certainly an accessible, effective grievance procedure is a crucial step in combatting sexual harassment. But the mere existence of such a procedure will not solve the problem. Women and concerned men must continue to organize and raise public consciousness about the issue and to confront the attitudes and realities which have permitted sexual harassment to go on.

Furthermore, although existing procedures are limited, WOASH strongly encourages anyone who has been harassed to contact us for advice about what avenues can be pursued.

Negotiations for a procedure, support for harassed women, and public outreach and education will be a long-term organizational task. WOASH asks any woman concerned about sexual harassment to contact us, come to our meetings, and join in our efforts. Leave a note in our mailbox in 300 Eshleman Hall on campus, or a phone message at ~~845-7273 (c/o Bay Area Women Against Rape)~~, and we'll get in touch with you and tell you how you can help.

* 642-6912 Student Advocate / W.O.A.S.H.