



## **The sentencing of Brock Turner is rape culture, but there is another issue at stake.**

Brock Turner was ["convicted of 3 felonies, including assault with intent to rape"](#). Despite the tariff for these felonies being a maximum of 14 years, Brock was only sentenced to 6 months in county jail and will be on the sexual offenders list for life. The judge Aaron Persky "said said positive character references and lack of a criminal record had persuaded him to be more lenient" and that "(p)risson would have a "severe impact on him".\* There was physical evidence and multiple eyewitnesses to the assault but Brock may only spend 3 months in county jail rather than 6 years in prison that the prosecutors were asking for because holding white, wealthy men accountable for their actions is an anathema to our culture.

[Buzzfeed has published the full victim impact statement here.](#) It is a clear demonstration of how wealth and whiteness allow men to use the criminal justice system to blame their victims. As it stands, the global criminal justice systems are simply not fit for purpose in dealing with crimes of sexualised violence. Far too much time is spent worrying about the impact on men accused of sexualised violence. We see this in demands that men deserve the right to anonymity because being accused of rape is apparently worse than being accused of any other crime, including murder of your own children. Very few cases of rape are actually prosecuted and many women and children have, justifiably, no faith in a system - starting from police failing to investigate reported crimes based on the assumption that all women are liars. The weight of the system remains in support of the accused allowing victims to be harassed, intimidated and denigrated in the media and in the court.

Brock's sentence of 6 months and probation is simply not surprising when dealing with a wealthy, white male perpetrator on a college campus who had the potential to be an Olympic athlete in swimming. There is a new trend that we've seen increasingly over the last few years that appears in Brock's father, Dan Turner, statement for pre-sentence hearings asking that Brock receive only probation. Because he's stopped eating steak:



As it stands now, Brock's life has been deeply altered forever by the events of Jan 17th and 18th. He will never be his happy go lucky self with that easy going personality and welcoming smile. His every waking minute is consumed with worry, anxiety, fear, and depression. You can see this in his face, the way he walks, his weakened voice, his lack of appetite. Brock always enjoyed certain types of food and is a very good cook himself. I was always excited to buy him a big ribeye steak to grill or to get his favorite snack for him. I had to make sure to hide some of my favorite pretzels or chips because I knew they wouldn't be around long after Brock walked in from a long swim practice. Now he barely consumes any food and eats only to exist. These verdicts have broken and shattered him and our family in so many ways. His life will never be the one that he dreamed about and worked so hard to achieve. That is a steep price to pay for 20 minutes of action out of his 20 plus years of life. The fact that he now has to register as a sexual offender for the rest of his life forever alters where he can live, visit, work, and how he will be able to interact with people and organizations. What I know as his father is that incarceration is not the appropriate punishment for Brock. He has no prior criminal history and has never been violent to anyone including his actions on the night of Jan 17th 2015. Brock can do so many positive things as a contributor to society and is totally committed to educating other college age students about the dangers of alcohol consumption and sexual promiscuity. By having people like Brock educate others on college campuses is how society can begin to break the cycle of binge drinking and its unfortunate results. Probation is the best answer for Brock in this situation and allows him to give back to society in a net positive way.

Very Respectfully,

Dan A. Turner

That Dan Turner doesn't think rape is a big deal isn't surprising. The fact that Turner thinks Brock should be allowed to teach other college age students "about the dangers of alcohol consumption and sexual promiscuity" as though rape were nothing more than having sexual intercourse with more than one partner in your life isn't surprising either. There is a [UK based training program](#) called [Prevent, Inform and Protect \(PIP\)](#) training designed not to teach professional footballers that being employed by a Premier League football team is not a license to commit sexualised violence, but to teach them how to behave if they are prosecuted for rape. [As with PIP](#), Turner is blaming his choice to commit sexualised violence on alcohol. Alcohol does not cause sexualised violence. Men use alcohol has an excuse to prevent taking responsibility for their crimes - Scottish Women's Aid term this "[cultural permission giving](#)".

As long as Brock Turner believes that he did nothing wrong, he will remain a high risk perpetrator. As long as he believes that not wanting to eat steak is a punishment, he will remain a high risk perpetrator. As long as his father makes excuses and blames alcohol, Brock will remain a high risk to women.

Our worry is not just that Brock's short sentence fails to recognise the severity of his crime or that that the judge clearly believes that prison isn't fair to wealthy, white men (and we'd be very interested to see the sentencing of other men given by Persky - we doubt very much a young Black man attending college would have received such a lenient sentence). We worry that colleges and universities will allow Brock return "to educate others ... (to) break the cycle of binge drinking and it's unfortunate results" as his father suggests. Sexual harassment and rape



on college campuses is rife in the US and the UK. We aren't seeing a move to challenge male entitlement and 'cultural permission giving' on campuses. Instead, we're seeing categorical refusals to recognise sexualised violence as a crime, [male entitlement](#), [male bonding](#), and [influenza](#) constructed as excuses (poor boys didn't know that rape was *really* all that big a deal), and [an increase in the harassment and abuse of women](#) who report their experiences.

Brock Turner's sentencing isn't all that surprising in a culture that [holds women accountable for the actions of men](#). A judge worrying more about the impact of prison on a rich, white male than on his victim doesn't shock us either. That we are suggesting that these very men should be allowed to teach other college students (and footballers) how to commit rape without consequence is a new part of the backlash to feminist campaigns to end rape culture. PIP already have access to teenage supporters of Premier Football clubs. How long will it be before Brock Turner is getting paid to talk to college athletes on how to blame alcohol and avoid real prison sentences for committing sexualised violence?

\*Quotes taken from [this Guardian article](#) by Elle Hunt.