

Acknowledgements & About Us

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Source: Revenge of Dinah: A Feminist Seder on Rape Culture in the Jewish Community



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Please direct any questions and feedback to Stephanie Goldfarb, Director of Youth Philanthropy & Leadership at the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago (stephanigoldfarb@juf.org) or Dr. Beth Catlett, Director of the Beck Research Initiative for Women, Gender, & Community at DePaul University (bcatlett@depaul.edu).

The statements made and views expressed herein are solely those of the (author) or Research Training Internship.

RTI Interns' Positionalities

As feminist writers, researchers, and ritual-makers, we acknowledge the responsibility we each have to our community members in our representations of them in this haggadah. As such, we have taken our own positions (regarding race, class, gender, culture, education, and other intersections) in relation to the research topic of rape culture in the Jewish community. Since "bias" is a naturally occurring human characteristic, framing our positionalities reflects our own placement within the many contexts, layers, power structures, identities, and subjectivities of experiences as Jewish teenagers living in a rape culture.

Izzy Arbetter: I am 18 and a senior at Highland Park High School. Being Jewish, white, and cis-gender is the norm in my community. I observe many of my peers from similar experiences grappling with how they can use their privileges to work for social justice. Much of the time, groups of boys at my school and in Jewish community will talk about girls in a way that disrespects us, and it's usually about our bodies. Comments will be made about our appearance and how "slutty" we are. Additionally, as I am about to begin my first year in college in the fall, I will be exposed to the rape culture that Greek life brings to college campuses. After

participating in RTI, I now realize how much rape culture has indirectly affected me from a social standpoint and will play a role in my life throughout college. As I continue my social justice and political education, I hope to share my knowledge of rape culture with people from similar backgrounds as me to help bring awareness about the consequences of perpetuating rape culture as people of privilege.

Shira Baron: I am 17 and a senior at Lane Tech College Prep in Chicago. I've been raised in an upper middle class, Jewish family and have privilege in the various travel abroad opportunities I've had. While I hold privilege as a white, cis female, the diversity of socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds in my community has offered me a stronger understanding of the justice spectrum. Rape culture has woven itself into my life through the relationships I have with my extended family. From a young age at family Seders or various other high holidays, the men and women in my extended family normalized "small talk" on a woman's appearance. This instilled the idea that a woman's worth corresponded with her physical features. This not only dehumanizes the woman but sends implicit messages that her nose, hair, and shape is more memorable and valuable of an asset than her character. I hope that my stance and experience with rape culture can shift the culture of female objectification that exists in a broader sense in the Jewish community.

Jordana Bornstein: I am 17, and a junior at Deerfield High School in Deerfield, IL. I identify as a white, cis, straight female, and come from an affluent background. I spend a lot of time in communities of privilege, specifically my school, the extra-curriculars I am involved in, and the summer travel opportunities I have partaken in. Rape culture affects me personally by manifesting in stereotypes and expectations my community holds for me, the dialect and culture of my school, and the gender roles present in my community. I find that women and girls in my community are expected to be smart, obedient, conventionally beautiful, and confident. Yet, I find that these stereotypes and expectations feed into the objectification of women's bodies, victim-blaming, and other aspects of rape culture.

Alana Chandler: I am a Junior at Walter Payton High School in Chicago. I've grown up in two vastly different cultures. One is my life in Chicago. I was raised in an upper-middle class neighborhood for my whole life and attended a majority white, privileged Jewish middle school. The other culture I was raised in is Japanese. Spending summers in Japan, I was accustomed to the modest, rural lifestyle of my grandparents, living a walk away from rice paddies. Although I have experienced racial prejudice, I consider myself privileged due to the place I live, the food on my table, and the education I have received. Although I embrace my dual identity, both illustrate examples of rape culture. Growing up with Japanese culture, I have realized that it can be extremely misogynistic. Most women do not work and sexualized images of women for the purpose of male enjoyment are publicly displayed in bookstores and train stations. At my Jewish school, I was one of the only girls in my advanced math class. I question whether it was really math ability or cultural standards which caused the large number of males in my class.

Becca Gadiel: I am a junior at Jones College Prep. I was raised in a Jewish, upper middle class family. While I personally hold a lot of privilege, I have been exposed to many different types of people from a very young age which has helped me think through the ways in which I move through the world. As my friends and I use the CTA as our primary mode of transportation, many of us get cat-called and harassed pretty regularly. These experiences definitely sparked my interest in rape culture, and have made me more passionate about rape culture awareness and prevention. The more knowledge I have gained about rape culture, the more I have realized how we are all implicated by it, and I hope that this haggadah can be useful to my community members.

Madison Hahamy: I am a sophomore at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy in Aurora, Illinois. This is my first year at this school and, coming from an affluent, predominantly white and Jewish area, being exposed to different communities has also exposed me to different, demeaning beliefs that I had not encountered before. I know what it feels like to be seen primarily as a "girl", rather than a hard-working,

accomplished student. However, I have also been exposed to empowering communities such as Girls in2 STEM, which prides itself on cultivating a future where the STEM gap is nally closed. Going to a school in which my accomplishments are constantly questioned has taught me to stand tall, instead of bow down. I hope that, through sharing my knowledge of rape culture, we can help create a society that stands tall.

Alyssa Kendall: I'm a sophomore at South Elgin High School and I was born and raised in the suburbs of Chicago. I live in an upper-middle class neighborhood and I've been fortunate enough to experience rich diversity at my school. I have a Christian father and a Jewish mother yet I have been raised 100% Jewish. My interest and passion in ending rape culture was first fueled when I was harassed on street by an older man when I was barely in my double digits.

Meghan Kier: I am a Junior at Schaumburg High School in the suburbs of Chicago. I come from middle class family. I attend a diverse high school. Because I live in the suburbs I do not get to take a train or walk to school, so I avoid a lot of street harassment. But I still see hints of sexism and rape culture in my everyday experience. I have seen girls get yelled at many times about wearing leggings or shorts to school. I personally had to change my outfit in 7th grade because my shorts were not at my knees. After seeing the Brock Turner case this summer it sparked my interest in rape culture and white privilege. Although this case was highly public, many other cases aren't, and because of that, I'm moved me to use my privilege to support those who are silenced.

Isabel Kucher: I am fifteen, and a Freshman at Northside College Prep. I am white and cisgender, and I come from a middle class family. Up until I entered high school, I had been exposed to relatively little racial and cultural diversity, because I live in an Orthodox Jewish neighborhood and I had gone to a Jewish middle school. This gave me a good amount of power and privilege within my community, but not nearly as much as a man would have had, because from a very young age, there tends to be a rigid dichotomy between the opportunities offered to Orthodox girls and boys. In my experience, the aim of Orthodoxy is (speaking very generally) for the boys to become Torah scholars, and the girls mothers. While this is not exactly rape easily identifiable as "rape culture", I think these socially-constructed gender roles contribute to cultures of permissiveness around sex/gender violence. I want to raise awareness around rape culture and promote the prevention of social attitudes that belittle and undermine women.

Chloe Wagner: I am a Junior at Francis. W Parker High School. I am relatively new to Chicago, having moved from the predominantly white suburbs of Detroit about two years ago. I am white, straight, cis-gender and come from an upper middle class family. Attending a private school in a wealthy area and living in a "good" neighborhood means that I spend a lot of my time around different kinds of privilege. Many of the communities that I am a part of are predominantly Jewish, white and straight. While living in Michigan, I was subjected to dress codes at both my middle and high school that were overwhelmingly focused on the girl students rather than the boys. My current school does not enforce a dress code, yet there are still expectations put on the female students to dress "appropriately" for the classroom. I also take public transportation to and from school, so catcalling is a frequent occurrence. Both of these things, as well as my strong passion for feminism, have sparked my interest in rape culture in hopes of dismantling the sexist structures that plague our society.