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This week it was announced that [no charges will be filed](#) in conjunction with a photographed and videotaped sex act between two Ohio University students. The female student involved, who was intoxicated and does not remember the incident, reported it as a sexual assault after images of it were circulated on social media by onlookers who chose to stand by, watch it, record it, and share it. The Athens County Prosecutor stated that the woman didn't remember what happened, and testing showed no sign of any "date rape drug." In reality, [alcohol is the most common drug to facilitate sexual assault](#). Perpetrators look for intoxicated victims who have higher vulnerabilities. Being intoxicated to the point of memory loss renders one incapable of giving consent.

From Athens to [Circleville](#) to [Steubenville](#) and all across Ohio, these cases highlight a glaring reality that we live in a culture that perpetuates sexual violence, degrades girls and women over social media, and glorifies bystanders who are too willing to photograph, videotape and share what they see, rather than intervene. Not only are survivors and their traumatic experiences fully exposed for public scrutiny, but the recording and sharing of such images is also a form of sexual violence, causing more harm to victims.

It's easy to blame this problem on the see-it-now, sensationalistic nature of social media and the ease with which one can record and share images. Technology at our fingertips does, to some extent, remove a certain amount of accountability, time and effort that might prompt one to stop and think. Still, there seems to be no short supply of people who are willing to 1) stand by and watch sexual assaults without intervening, 2) take out one's phone with the intention of recording what they see, 3) photograph and/or record a video of it, and 4) share that image – irrevocably, permanently - with the world. Technology may provide the means, but people must first provide the desire and consent.

The number of those willing to supply such images to the world is unfortunately eclipsed by the number of people who are too happy to *consume* such images. Recently, I was searching online for a brief video to be used in a presentation about teen sexual assault. I found several tasteful, impactful videos of teen survivors willingly telling their stories. These videos had been viewed up to *3,000 times*. Among the list of links to "related" videos on the side of the webpage was the link to a video entitled "Hottest Gang Rape Ever." It had been viewed *over 14 million times*. Sexual violence is not for *consumption* and it should never be tolerated or glorified.

When images of sexual violence are so casually procured, shared, and viewed, everyone is impacted. Survivors are further re-victimized and traumatized, with violations of their privacy distributed for the world to watch like it's some movie...when it's actually that person's life. Our society has become further desensitized to the reality of sexual violence and has lost sight of the [impact on victims](#). Survivors deserve better. Everyone has an active role in preventing abuse. To build safer communities, everyone must speak up against incidents or messages that normalize sexual harm, abuse, or exploitation. Become an engaged bystander: someone who intervenes before, during, or after a situation when they see or hear behaviors that promote sexual violence. Not sure what to do? Get someone who is.

And after you read this, share this, talk about this, and be sure to change the social media conversation and retweet #EndRapeCultureOhio.

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