

March 12, 2013



## SAMPLE: LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# Social change has to happen everywhere not just in Steubenville

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Dear Editor:

As the nation's attention once again turns to Steubenville for the trial of two high school football players charged with rape, we are reminded how far we have come as a society and how far we have yet to go. Rape happens far too often. This crime occurs with alarming frequency in large and small communities everywhere. One in 5 women and 1 in 71 men will be raped at some point in their lives. Approximately 30% of women were between the ages of 11 and 17 at the time of their first completed rape. Over one-third of women who report being raped before age 18 also experience rape as an adult. What we have to ask ourselves is why, and what can we do to stop it?

We have seen numerous examples in the news of athletes and celebrities, of all ages, exploiting the social status and sense of entitlement bestowed upon them by coaches, parents, fans and peers. This has resulted in crimes of all kinds. Our societal obsession with sports and idolatry of athletes has created a culture in which any behavior is excusable, so long as the game is not negatively impacted. The tragic result is that a group of citizens has been permitted to use and abuse others. When young people are part of this group, both they and the adults supporting their behavior must be held accountable.

Sexual violence does not occur in a vacuum. It occurs within the context of society, and it flourishes when that society values athletic ability more highly than the safety and dignity of others. Rape is a devastating crime that impacts survivors for the rest of their lives. No game is worth that kind of pain, and we must act to ensure that we prevent sexual violence from occurring in the future.

The outrage we have witnessed in Steubenville is not misplaced, but nor should it be isolated to this one town and this one case. We owe it to every survivor to confront the crime of rape, and we owe it to ourselves to confront any aspect of our society that supports it.

Sincerely,

[Your Name], [Your Title]

[Your Organization]

[Organization Address]

[Phone]

[Email]