

Brown University's Statement on Recent Sexual Assault Controversies in NYC SJP and SJP East:

In order to maintain the political integrity of our SJP, we find it necessary to publicly condemn perpetrators of sexual assault within affiliated groups, as well as those who remain silent in the face of these unforgivable acts. If we are to call for justice, liberation, and emancipation, we cannot abide by such transgressions within our organizations. How can we possibly condemn sexual violence perpetrated by settler colonialism in Palestine if we fail to condemn the same acts within our own groups? We invite other SJP chapters to join us in this statement and intend to formally adopt organizational policies that make clear our positions on sexual assault within our group.

Specifically, in order to put this policy into practice, we ask the SJP East Board to join us in condemning two NYC SJP representatives, Tafadar Sourov and Khalil Antonio Vasquez and ban them from all SJP work. Moreover we also ask that NYC Students for Justice in Palestine be specifically barred and or castigated for their handling of this situation. These two representatives of NYC SJP were accused and found to be perpetrators of serious patriarchal behavior, including but not limited to abuse, manipulation and silencing. While we do not know the specifics of their abuse within NYC SJP, these statements are corroborated by NCP LC and RSCC (two orgs these members were a part of) stating clearly that they were expelled and put on investigation and then that these two people planned to affectively crash a gender struggle session to silence the survivors story.

While the NYC SJP has expelled them, there have not been any statements of condemnation made. Therefore there is no indication or way to know that these abusers are not going to use this space as a place for political rehabilitation. Moreover, as is shown through both the leadership and a few of its members, there is a tendency to politically regard these individuals as "inactive" and as part of another SJP (specifically CCNY) as a way to both shy away from criticism, but also expose how rape culture is perpetuated within the group. When a survivor specifically asked for a public statement to be made, they were silenced by a prominent NYC SJP member, and told that this request was bureaucratic, and that this issue was a waste of their time. To make things worse, there are those within the leadership who have shown awful gender practice and have continuously ignored both the needs of the survivors and have the gall to stay silent as this process continues.

Finally we also want to take the time to critically acknowledge Tafadar Sourov's appeal. There is no reason for us to really respond to the meat of the message, but we should use this as a moment to highlight the political error of silently kicking out someone and not exposing their disgusting practices of abuse. By allowing this man to leave, we have allowed an abuser to give a desperate "plea" of redress. By allowing this man to leave without any sort of public isolation, and therefore taking his ability to speak, he has by making a national message character assassinated the survivors, and opportunistically peddles a plea of an investigation. Considering what we already know about these two men's gender practice, the fact that they had tried to silence the survivors on numerous occasions, including trying to crash a gender struggle session that this investigation would mirror something like an American system of jurisprudence. Where survivors of sexual assault and gender violence are either silenced and their

stories denied because they do not fit into the racist, sexist, classist diameters that narrows to an almost unreal extent the diverse and incredibly multivarious ways gender violence and sexual abuse play out in this country. Or they could be trying to use Transformative justice as a way to “rehabilitate themselves” by implying that there should be any parity between himself and Khalil and the people they have abused. In this context, NYC SJP’s silence is deafening, allowing a former member to spew such nonsense is unbecoming, and should be a subject of any accountability process within NYC SJP.

There are no kind words for us to use for this reaction. Overall it shows a disgusting disdain to the lives and opinions of these survivors. It shows a lack of responsibility, and a callous disregard for how these people use their “activist” credentials to influence and harm other people. It is why we claim that NYC SJP is complicit in rape culture, no matter the individual protestations of its members. And we will continue to claim they are, until they have put the necessary support in place to not only be reactive in cases of and gendered violence but also proactive by actively combating a culture of rape apologism by supporting queer and trans leadership, working to defend the dignity of the survivors and exposing these people for what they are. These two people are not just bad seeds, but a symptom of the continued prevalence of patriarchy within our circles. We must always be conscious to listen to the voices of the survivors, and also be proactive rather than reactive to these situations by constantly trying to build women’s leadership, fight against machismo, and seek to equalize labor between people of various genders within our group. We must also be intentional in building the SJP’s capabilities to support the survivors within our organization.

People should have the right to defend themselves against those who would clearly take sexual and physical advantage of them by any means possible. By not being public, there is no way to know whether perpetrators are expelled from the organization, producing the misconception that perpetrators are still active members, a potential access point for continued abuse, which can prevent potential members from having a real, consensual understanding of the organization. It also relinquishes accountability. Why shouldn't they know that there was an abuser within the group? Like consensual sex relations, you are taking away potential members and sympathizers abilities to consent both to being members and/or participants in events because you are hiding critical knowledge about the organization.

Therefore we criticize NYC SJP’s practice regarding how they handle gendered violence, but we must take time to reflect that this is representative of a disturbing trend within activist spaces: the continued mishandling of the issue of sexual violence. We are all complicit in this transgression given a history of SJP activism that has been either secretive or unaccountable. We also recognize that there is also the fact that there is the reality that there are SJPs, who do not even do the bare minimum and expel their abusers. We must do better, and so we also ask that all SJPs look towards improving their own gender practice as well.

As an organization, it is important both for the integrity of our SJPs, but also the integrity of all spaces that these names be known and condemned publicly. There is no reason for secrecy regarding rape culture within our spaces. Indeed, no principled feminist practice within an organization can exist without trying to isolate and expose these abusers. It is not enough to only advocate women and oppressed genders liberation -- we must actively create the necessary conditions within our group. Therefore we ask other

organizations to stand in solidarity with the survivors, but also with Columbia and Bard SJP by asking other organizations to write specific statements and/or create a comprehensive policy on gender and sexual violence.