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"Dear Stanford: You must reckon with your history of sexual violence" by Seo-Young Chu

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<https://stanforddaily.com/2022/07/12/from-the-community-dear-stanford-you-must-reckon-with-your-history-of-sexual-violence/>

Opinions

From the Community | Dear Stanford: You must reckon with your history of sexual violence



Seo-Young Chu was a student at Stanford when she was sexually abused by a Stanford professor in 2000. (Courtesy of Seo-Young Chu)

By From the Community

July 12, 2022

Content warning: This article contains references to rape and sexual assault.

Seo-Young Chu M.A. '01 stopped going by the name "[Jennie](#)" after she was raped in 2000 by a Stanford professor, she said. Her contact information can be found here: <https://hcommons.org/members/schu/>

Dear Stanford: It should never have come to this.

Dear Stanford: I've given you [so many opportunities](#) to correct your mistakes.

Dear Stanford: When you [create traumatized alumni](#), ask your traumatized alumni for donations, betray our trust again and again, continually fail to learn from your blunders, and have the audacity to claim you are "helpless," all while remaining obscenely rich, you cannot call yourself a "good school."

Dear Stanford: This was supposed to be an "open letter" but my trauma is radioactive and this letter is mutating, turning into something else.

Dear Stanford: You had decades to prevent the Barletta situation. Decades. All that wealth — and for what? Truly a waste. You have no excuse.

By the way, when I address "Stanford" here, I am addressing those in positions of power and authority. The more power you have, and the more you are being paid, the more accountable you are to your community and for Stanford's failures.

Dear Stanford: In 2000, you let your "star" faculty violate my 22-year-old self. That's how my career began — with violence I am still struggling to comprehend. I was so naive and inexperienced I was confused by what was happening. I —

Dear Stanford: Now you're [sending your rape culture to CUNY](#) where I work and teach? How dare you! How dare you invade my home?

Dear Stanford: This letter is repetitive because traumatic re-living is repetitive and you continue to resurrect those hideous memories by making headlines about rape culture on your campus.

Dear Stanford: My parents sacrificed a lot to give me a life less chaotic and violent than theirs. They trusted you to keep their daughter safe from the "bad" behavior of serial abusers. Their trust was betrayed — not once, not twice, but over and over and over and over and over again.

Dear Stanford: CUNY is underfunded. You are overfunded. What is the correct way to redress such inequality? I don't know. I do know that letting your rape culture make contact with CUNY students is the wrong way.

Dear Stanford: Colleagues were "repeatedly asked to 'babysit' Barletta"? In what universe is such infantilization of a serial abuser acceptable?

Dear Stanford: You cannot possibly claim that you are "helpless" here, that you "had no idea," that you are understaffed or under-resourced.

Dear Stanford: When I was a 22-year-old first-year Ph.D. student in your English Department, your "star" faculty raped and harassed me. I was unable, under such circumstances, to excel, to collaborate with colleagues (he isolated me), unable at times to work (I was too busy trying to avoid being raped), often unable to think at all. And my abuser did this to others at Stanford too. Not only did my abuser harm multiple students, but you continue to allow [multiple people in positions of power and authority to harm generations of students and employees](#).

Dear Stanford: How could you. How could you [name that library in his honor](#) after you yourself punished him for what he did to me? He used one of those [books](#) to — I won't finish this sentence. I won't go there. Not again.

Dear Stanford: You have squandered my patience and goodwill.

Dear Stanford: [Archuleta](#), [Barletta](#), [Fliegelman](#), [Moretti](#) — why? Just — why?

Dear Stanford: This is not how I want to be spending my summer. I was actually working on my book project when news about Vincent Barletta "mentoring" CUNY students reset my brain's time zone to [#PTSD](#). For the past month, I've been re-living the year 2000 (when your "star" faculty violated my 22-year-old self).

Dear Stanford: Fuck you for [covering up](#) the abuse and the punishment.

Dear Stanford: You are Victor Frankenstein and my suffering is the creature you made. Take responsibility for your creation.

Dear Stanford: I had just turned 22 years old. I was naive and inexperienced. I was a first-year graduate student,

new to the profession, new to teaching, new to California, new to Stanford. He was tenured. He was powerful. He was in his 50s. [He had been a Stanford institution for decades](#). This is disjointed because I'm reliving it all over again. Shortly after he violated me, I was hospitalized. Shortly after I was discharged from the hospital, I gave a [guest lecture on Seneca Falls and women's rights](#). His response was to tell me I forgot to mention women's right to sexual pleasure. There are gaps here because trauma is nonlinear, trauma broke my sense of time. At some point you conducted an investigation. As a [result](#) of [the investigation](#), which was a brutal experience, you punished my abuser by suspending him for two years without pay. Some of his colleagues had the gall to blame me for the whole debacle.

Dear Stanford: By enabling rape culture and abuse to flourish, you promote hostile thinking environments. You poison ideas. You destroy minds. You weaken intellectual communities. You prevent work from happening.

Dear Stanford: Every minute, hour, day, week, month, year, decade of your silence and inaction is disrupting my "career," is relevant to my work, has shaped my sense of self as an academic.

Dear Stanford: I've never sued you. I've generously given you free feedback. I've extended every deadline. I've been more than patient with you. I've spent countless hours [educating you](#) and [cleaning up your messes](#).

Dear Stanford: By criticizing you I am not "attacking" your students, alumni, and workers. I am trying to make your campus better. Safer. More hospitable to learning. By speaking out like this I am trying to be a good alumna. I hope you are paying attention.

Dear Stanford: The truth is that my career started with rape. My career has been shaped by rape. My sense of who I am as an academic: shaped by rape. The gaps in my CV are trauma-generated plot holes that lead to Northern California in the year 2000.

Dear Stanford: I'm angry, I'm disabled, I have work to do, I have a migraine. I want to lie down and shut my eyes and rest. But this is too important. I can't rest until CUNY is safe from your rape culture.

Dear Stanford: Have you even read "[A Refuge for Jae-in Doe](#)"? The whole point of my sharing all that pain — and in a language your English Department would understand: sonnets! The Western Canon! English (Major)! — was to prevent more students from being harmed.

Dear Stanford: I am as "proud" to have a degree from your school as I would be "proud" to sport a blood diamond. Yes, the degree may glitter. But how much pain, injustice, conflict, humiliation, abuse, and violence does such

glitter belie?

Dear Stanford: I am ashamed to be associated with you.

Dear Stanford: If I were to write a book about your response to my requests for answers and answerability, most of the book's pages would be blank. Vacuous. Empty.

Dear Stanford: Emptiness, too, is a response. And by definition it is worthless.

Dear Stanford: Speaking out does not come naturally to me. Speaking out does not come naturally to many of us. In fact, it hurts. But remaining silent hurts even more. Don't let our advocacy be in vain.

Dear Stanford: Prove to me that CUNY students are safe from the toxic rape culture that flourishes on your campus.

Dear Stanford: You are indebted to me. You owe it to me — to all of us — to do better.

An Incomplete Compilation of Links to Sources Documenting Stanford's History of Sexual Violence, in Chronological Order

1. ["A Refuge for Jae-in Doe: Fugues in the Key of English Major". Author\(s\):: Seo-Young Chu \(November 3, 2017\).](#)
2. ["Ghost From the Past: Professor's essay about being harassed and raped by her late adviser sparks calls for public acknowledgment of the reasons for his past suspension from Stanford and the renaming of a disciplinary society mentorship award that bore his name." By Colleen Flaherty \(November 9, 2017\).](#)
3. ["2 Women Say Stanford Professors Raped Them Years Ago." By Katherine Mangan \(NOVEMBER 11, 2017\).](#)
4. ["English faculty told to redirect press questions on sexual assault allegations to University communications." By Brian Contreras \(Nov. 13, 2017, 1:00 a.m.\).](#)
5. ["Sexual Harassment and Assault in Higher Ed: What's Happened Since Weinstein." By Nell Gluckman , Brock Read, Bianca Quilantan, and Katherine Mangan \(NOVEMBER 13, 2017\).](#)
6. ["Editorial Board: Let's hold faculty to a higher standard on sexual assault." Opinion by Vol. 252 Editorial Board \(Nov. 14, 2017, 3:00 a.m.\).](#)
7. ["Here's What Sexual Harassment Looks Like in Higher Education." By Katherine Mangan \(NOVEMBER 16, 2017\).](#)
8. ["Open Letter from Alumni to Stanford: Not in Our Name." by OP-ED \(NOVEMBER 22, 2017\).](#)

9. ["A Professor Is Kind of Like a Priest': Two recent cases reveal how the structure of American graduate schools enables sexual harassment and worse."](#) By Irene Hsu and Rachel Stone (Nov. 30, 2017).
10. ["Stanford: Sexual misconduct revelation exposes storied professor's secret."](#) (Dec. 1, 2017).
11. ["Behind the Fliegelman sexual misconduct investigation."](#) By Fangzhou Liu (Dec. 2, 2017, 3:37 p.m.).
12. ["Former students of Jay Fliegelman describe inappropriate relationships, sexual misconduct in 1980s, 1990s."](#) By RUAIRÍ ARRIETA-KENNA (DECEMBER 3, 2017).
13. ["An open letter to Stanford on sexual harassment in academia."](#) Opinion by Gloria Fisk and From the Community (Dec. 5, 2017, 3:00 a.m.). NOTE: Professor Alex Woloch has yet to respond (June 2022).
14. ["What Happens When Sex Harassment Disrupts Victims' Academic Careers."](#) By Nell Gluckman (DECEMBER 6, 2017).
15. ["Former Grad Students: Our Professors Raped Us."](#) By Vanessa Ranaño (Dec 7, 2017).
16. ["What Happened"](#) By Kimberly Latta (January 19, 2018).
17. ["'Fairly Normal and Routine': 50 Years of Sexual Violence at Stanford."](#) By RUAIRÍ ARRIETA-KENNA & ROXY BONAFONT (JANUARY 31, 2018).
18. ["Provost, General Counsel offer personal contributions to anti-sexual assault organization after Stanford denies Fliegelman victim's request for donation."](#) By Alex Tsai (Feb. 26, 2018, 12:20 a.m.).
19. ["After 'A Refuge for Jae-in Doe': A Social Media Chronology."](#) By Seo-Young Chu (March 15, 2018).
20. ["Academia's #MeToo moment: 'I'm really struck by how endemic this is': 'There isn't a day in my life when I haven't been eaten away by it in some way.'"](#) By Nick Anderson (May 10, 2018).
21. ["'My Professional World Has Gotten Smaller': How sexual harassment and assault distort scholars' lives in the academy."](#) By Julia Schmalz (MAY 11, 2018).
22. ["Stanford One Year After #MeToo: How Stanford's Response Failed Victims of Sexual Assault."](#) By KYLE WANG (JUNE 14, 2019).
23. ["How #MeToo Helped Seo-Young Chu Name Her Harasser — Testimonies New York Magazine"](#) (Sep 29, 2019).
24. ["Was It Worth It?"](#) By Irin Carmon and Amelia Schonbek Additional reporting by Sarah Jones (Sept. 30, 2019).
25. ["Title IX at Stanford: A timeline of recent events."](#) By Emma Talley, Kate Selig, Sarina Deb, Daniel Wu, Ujwal Srivastava, Lauryn Johnson, Anastasiia Malenko and Danielle Echeverria (June 9, 2020, 11:35 p.m.).
26. ["Stanford removes library collection, brick honoring affiliates accused of sexual misconduct."](#) By Cameron Ehsan, Victoria Hsieh and Kathryn Zheng (July 9, 2021, 5:10 p.m.).
27. [Seo-Young Chu on sexual violence at Stanford and Korean American # MeToo](#) (March 3, 2022).

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