

OPINION



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GOP Playbook Was Textbook Abusive Behavior

Women who were outraged are mobilized

BY ANNY MARTINEZ

Shortly before he became a Supreme Court justice, Brett Kavanaugh made two things clear: He likes beer. And he's a self-righteous beneficiary of presumption of innocence.



Indeed, Kavanaugh was provided a considerable benefit of the doubt for a man credibly accused of a horrible crime. In an ordinary job interview, much less one for a lifetime appointment to Supreme Court, most people couldn't count on the same.

Kavanaugh defenders said a lot about the presumption of innocence. But in truth they were following a much more menacing playbook, common to many abusers called out for their behavior.

Psychologists call it DARVO: deny, attack, reverse victim and offender.

Fielding questions from reporters the other day, President Trump

said this: "It's a very scary time for young men in America."

And it certainly should be, for young and old men alike that have taken advantage of or degraded women who are now having their moment and speaking out. Trump painted these people as victims, not offenders.

This tactic was also used by Sen. Lindsey Graham, who compared what Judge Kavanaugh was experiencing to "hell" and vilified Democrats for giving voice to his accusers.

Dr. Christine Blasey Ford's credible (and polygraphed, might I add) account and moving testimony through hours of questioning was recognized by both Democratic and Republican senators.

That questioning was presided over by Rachel Mitchell, a prosecutor hired to represent Republican senators on the committee, none of whom are women. Mitchell delicately handled Dr. Blasey Ford's testimony for these Republican senators — who then roared back into action when Judge Kavanaugh took the seat.

That's when these senators asked their own questions and

used the hearing to defend their nominee. Unlike Trump, most tried not to attack Dr. Blasey Ford directly. But they were unmistakably painting Kavanaugh as the victim.

Mitchell's hiring demonstrated that these senators remain badly out of touch with how to engage with allegations of sexual assault. They hired a female prosecutor to avoid accountability, not to engage the accusations seriously.

Dr. Blasey-Ford had zero to gain and has already sacrificed so much. "I've had to relive this trauma in front of the whole world," she lamented.

Yet Republicans still treated her little better than Anita Hill. "Are you a scorned woman?" Sen. Howell Heflin infamously demanded of Hill. Then as now, they showed the same clear disdain the GOP has for an empowered woman who knows she has the same rights as a man.

Kavanaugh has been confirmed, but Blasey Ford's testimony wasn't in vain. Her courageous and credible account has helped millions of Americans confront the reality of sexual misconduct — and how far we still must go in the way these cases are handled.

More women are standing up, and more men are standing with them. Fourteen men were arrested in one recent protest against Kavanaugh's confirmation, alongside many women.

One of those male protestors, a hip hop artist named Mysonne General, said this: "By standing for women, we have to acknowledge there is a culture of sexual violence, a culture men have benefited from, and in order for it to change men have to change it."

A few old politicians are still relying on DARVO. They're trying to take sexual misconduct and violence towards women off the table as a political issue. In addition to exonerating powerful men, they're protecting rape culture.

But outraged women are mobilized. And more than ever are running for office. Candidates like Ayanna Pressley, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Nika Edgardo, and Representative Ilhan Omar, to name a few, are showing that uncompromising women can run — and they can win.

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