



Tessa Ormenyi via AP

In this Sept. 16, 2015 photo students hold up a sign about rape at White Plaza during New Student Orientation on the Stanford University campus in Stanford, Calif.

Stanford sex assault victim becomes a powerful symbol

By SUDHIN THANAWALA
Associated Press

"It brought tears to my eyes ... it's not typical that somebody does come forward in this type of way."

— Victoria Cress,
Youngstown State University counselor

SAN FRANCISCO — With her furious and graphic 12-page letter to the court, the young woman at the center of the Stanford University sexual assault case has instantly become a powerful symbol of courage and resilience to other sex-crime victims, all while remaining anonymous.

Her widely shared statement has been held up as a must-read for boys and young men and a source of strength to other women who have fallen prey to sexual assault.

BuzzFeed and *The Washington Post* posted it online, and CNN's Ashleigh Banfield read nearly the entire thing on the air.

In it, the woman recalled the emptiness she experienced after the attack, vented her anger over her assailant's seeming lack of remorse and described in detail her invasive hospital examination, recounting the ruler nurses used to measure the scrapes on her body and how enough pine needles to fill a paper bag came out of her hair.

"What brought tears to my eyes was just how courageous she was," said Victoria Kress, who teaches counseling at Youngstown State University in Ohio and works with sex assault victims. "It's not typical that somebody does come forward in this type of a way."

A nationwide furor erupted last week when a judge sentenced the woman's attacker, Brock Turner, a 20-year-old former swimmer at Stanford, to six months in jail, triggering criticism that a star athlete from a privileged background had gotten special treatment. Prosecutors had asked for six years in prison.

The fury grew when it was learned that Turner's father had sent the judge a letter lamenting that his son had already paid a steep price "for

20 minutes of action."

The victim has not come forward publicly outside court, and little is known about her other than her age — 23 — and that she wasn't a Stanford student. She was attacked as she lay unconscious behind a dumpster in January 2015 after drinking at a fraternity party, authorities said. She said she did not remember the assault.

In her statement, she said she would learn from a news report later how she had been found naked.

She did not immediately tell her boyfriend and parents about the attack, pretending the whole thing wasn't real, she said. She didn't talk, eat or sleep.

But she also thanked her parents, sister, boyfriend and friends for their support and a prosecutor who "never doubted" her.

Experts said she effectively highlighted the obstacles to recovery that sex assault victims face and the support they need to succeed.

"We know that there are things like being believed, being supported by those around you that can help in terms of recovery," said Victoria Banyard, a psychology professor at the University of New Hampshire who studies the long-term effects of sexual assault.

In a recent text message, the woman told a prosecutor that she was staying anonymous to protect her identity, but also as a statement.

A look at chronic absenteeism

WASHINGTON (AP) — The problem of students habitually missing school varies widely from state to state, with about one-third of students in the nation's capital absent 15 days or more in a single school year, according to an Associated Press analysis of government statistics.

At the other end of the spectrum, Florida had the lowest rate of chronic absenteeism, 4.5 percent in the 2013-2014 school year.

Overall, the national average of chronic absenteeism was 13 percent, or about 6.5 million students, the Education Department said.

"Chronic absenteeism is a national problem," Secretary of Education John B. King Jr., said in a statement on Wednesday. "Frequent absences from school can be devastating to a child's education."

Bob Balfanz, a research professor at Johns Hopkins University and director of the Everyone Graduates Center, called the numbers disturbing.

"If you're not there, you don't learn, and then you fall behind. You don't pass your classes. You don't get the credits in high school and that's what leads to dropping out," Balfanz said in an interview.

The report was the first release of chronic absentee figures from the department.

The Obama administration began a program last fall that now works with states and local groups in 30 communities to identify mentors to help habitually absent kids get back on track. As part of the effort, the White House said Wednesday that a New York-based company, STATE Bags, was donating 30,000 backpacks to children being mentored in the program.

NBA star Kevin Durant is working with the administration on the initiative. "Sometimes the reasons come down to not having what you need to be present and ready ... like a book bag, school supplies or the support of a caring adult," Durant said in a statement.

Detroit is among the new communities to sign up for the My Brother's Keeper Success Mentors Initiative.

Of the 100 largest school districts by enrollment, Detroit had the highest rate of chronic absenteeism. Nearly 58 percent of students were chronically absent in the 2013-2014 school year.

In Washington, D.C., Michelle Lerner, press secretary for the District



AP Photo/Matt Rourke

Children gather in the corridors of City Hall in Philadelphia, Wednesday.

of Columbia Schools, said the district is taking an "all-hands-on-deck approach" to try to ensure that students attend school.

She said the school system last year met its "in-seat attendance goal — a measure that shows how many students are actually present on any given day — of 89.5 percent," which she said was an improvement over the previous two school years.

"But we still have more work to do to ensure more students continue to be in school every day," Lerner said.

Elsewhere around the country, Washington state and Alaska had chronic absentee rates hovering around one-quarter of students with that level of absences.

According to AP's analysis, girls were just as likely as boys to habitually miss school. Nearly 22 percent of all American Indian students were reported as regularly absent, followed by Native Hawaiians at 21 percent and black students at 17 percent. Hispanic and white students were close to the national average of 13 percent.

Students are regularly missing school for lots of reasons, Balfanz says. Many are poor and could be staying home to care for a sibling or helping with elder care. Others are avoiding school because they're being bullied or they worry it's not safe. And then, there are some students who simply skip school.

Schools should be creating welcoming environments to make students feel wanted each day, Balfanz

says. They also need to build relationships with the kids who are regularly absent to figure out what's keeping them away, he said.

As part of its Civil Rights Data Collection, the department surveyed all public schools in the country, covering over 95,000 schools and 50 million students. Roughly one in seven of all K-12 public schools nationwide reported having not a single chronically absent student that year.

Chronic absenteeism is one of several topics covered in the data collection. It also looked at school discipline and high-rigor course offerings. Other figures from the report:

- Black preschool children are 3.6 times as likely to get one or more out-of-school suspensions as their white counterparts.

- Black children represent 19 percent of preschoolers, yet they account for 47 percent of preschool kids getting suspended.

- White students make up 41 percent of preschoolers, and 28 percent of preschool kids with suspensions.

- Nationwide, almost half of high schools offered classes in calculus, and more than three-quarters offered Algebra II.

- 33 percent of high schools with substantial black and Latino enrollment offered calculus. That compares to 56 percent of high schools with low numbers of black and Latino children that offered calculus. Similar gaps were seen for physics, chemistry and Algebra II.

BRIEFLY

Iraqi troops in Fallujah for first time in 2 years

NAYMIYAH, Iraq (AP) — A column of black Humvees carrying Iraqi special forces rolled into southern Fallujah on Wednesday, the first time in more than two years that government troops have entered the western city held by the Islamic State group.

The counterterrorism troops fought house-to-house battles with the militants in the Shuhada neighborhood, and the operation to retake the city is expected to be one of the

most difficult yet.

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi promised a swift victory when he announced the start of the operation on May 22 to liberate Fallujah, about 40 miles west of Baghdad. But the complexity of the task quickly became apparent.

Although other security forces from the federal and provincial police, government-sanctioned Shiite militias and the Iraqi military have surrounded the city, only the elite counterterrorism troops are fighting inside Fallujah at this stage of the operation. And they are doing so under the close cover of U.S.-led airpower.

Periodic table elements named for Moscow, Japan, Tennessee

NEW YORK (AP) — You'll soon see four new names on the periodic table of the elements, including three that honor Moscow, Japan and Tennessee.

The names are among four recommended Wednesday by an international scientific group. The fourth is named for a Russian scientist.

The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry, which rules on chemical element names,

presented its proposal for public review. The names had been submitted by the element discoverers.

The four elements, known now by their numbers, completed the seventh row of the periodic table when the chemistry organization verified their discoveries last December.

Tennessee is the second U.S. state to be recognized with an element; California was the first.

Element names can come from places, mythology, names of scientists or traits of the element.

Other examples: americium, einsteinium and titanium.

AP Interview: Clinton says Trump behaving like a demagogue

By LISA LERER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Hillary Clinton opened her general election campaign against Donald Trump on Wednesday by accusing him of behaving like a "demagogue," likening his attacks on judges, the media, his opponents and their families to dark moments in world history.

"It's classic behavior by a demagogue," she said in a telephone interview with The Associated Press. "We've seen it many, many places and times in the world, and that's why I think it's so dangerous."

The presumptive Democratic nominee, who declared victory in her race against Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders on Tuesday, a day after reaching the number of delegates needed to claim the nomination, seemed to wonder during the interview whether Trump's candidacy was little more than an elaborate political stunt.

"I don't know if this is just, you know, political gamesmanship that he thinks plays to the lowest common denominator, but whatever the reason for it is, it's wrong and it should not be tolerated by anybody," she said.

But even as she questioned the sincerity of the real estate mogul's rhetoric, Clinton said voters need to take his words seriously and called them evidence that he is untrustworthy, unqualified and unprepared for the rigors of the White House.

While the two candidates have never been personally close, their political and financial circles have occasionally overlapped over the years — especially during Clinton's

Bernie Sanders under pressure to quit

WASHINGTON (AP) — Under mounting pressure from Democratic leaders to abandon his presidential campaign, Bernie Sanders returned home to Vermont on Wednesday following dispiriting losses to Hillary Clinton. He vowed to fight on for a political revolution but showed signs he would bow to the inevitable and bring his insurgent effort to a close.

For Sanders, as his remarkable White House bid runs out of next stops, the only question is when. Just as important for Sanders is how to keep his campaign alive in some form, by converting his newfound political currency into policies to change the Democratic Party, the Senate or even the country itself, on issues including income inequality and campaign finance reform.

To that end the senator was to travel to Washington on Thursday to meet with President Barack Obama and Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid and speak at a rally. Obama is expected to endorse Clinton as soon as Thursday after his meeting with Sanders, and Reid is prepared to discuss with Sanders how the self-described democratic socialist might advance his goals back in the Senate.

time as a senator from New York, Trump's home state. Clinton and her husband, former president Bill Clinton, attended Trump's third wedding in 2005, and she said later that she thought Trump was "always entertaining."

But Clinton expressed surprise at what she described as the billionaire's descent into "conspiracy theories" in recent years.

"He always had opinions which he freely expressed," she said.

"I never really ever had any information about him engaging in bigotry and prejudice until he took up the cause of the birthers against President Obama, which is really so bizarre," she added, with an incredulous laugh.

Clinton and Democrats supporting her campaign are attempting to cast Trump as a ruthless con artist who is tricking voters in the same way he duped prospec-

tive students into enrolling into his now-defunct Trump University, a business that offered real estate seminars.

It's an argument Clinton and her aides believe will appeal not only to Democrats, but independent voters and even some Republicans worried about how Trump would manage the nation's economy and foreign affairs.

While stopping short of calling Trump a racist for his recent comments about the federal judge overseeing a class-action lawsuit against Trump University, Clinton said her rival has a "very unfortunate and divisive tendency to attack all kind of Americans."

While Clinton seeks to paint Trump as a dangerous huckster, he has spent the past several weeks since claiming the Republican nomination working to define her candidacy.

torate is seeking "specific policies" more than "catchy soundbites" and "throwing slogans around."

For example, when asked Wednesday about the upcoming Summer Olympics in Brazil, she offered a lengthy assessment of the public health crisis caused by the Zika virus.

While Clinton said it was probably too late to cancel the Rio de Janeiro Games, as some public health officials have urged, she described the situation as "deeply distressing."

"It's really a serious public threat health and I don't know that we've heard the last word about the advice about whether people or certain kinds of people should go to Rio or not," she said. "This is not just about Rio and the Olympics, this is about a potential outbreak and epidemic."

After calling on Democrats to unify around her candidacy, Clinton said she had no regrets about her campaign against Sanders.

She wouldn't offer any hints of what kinds of concessions her campaign might be willing to give the Vermont senator in the party platform.

The two campaigns and the Democratic National Committee are beginning the process of drafting the policy on which Democrats are to rally around in the fall election.

On Thursday, President Barack Obama — who defeated Clinton in 2008 — was expected to formally endorse his one-time rival, after meeting with Sanders at the White House.

"I feel very good about the campaign we ran," she said. "It's time that we move forward and unite the party."