

ANGER, WOMEN, AND PROTEST: ANALYZING THE POLITICAL VALUE OF
FEMININE RAGE

by

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ABSTRACT

The aim of *Anger, Women, and Protest: Analyzing the Political Value of Feminine Rage*, is to determine the political impacts of gendered anger. Activism requires anger in order to be successful. Everyone experiences anger, but gender differences dictate the degree to which anger can be expressed. Anger is less accessible to women, and in this their activism is largely silenced. By examining the nineteenth century Cult of True Womanhood and its subsequent hold on present culture, it is revealed how and why women have been removed from expressions of anger. Women's anger and its significance to political activism is highlighted through analyses of the 2018 Kavanaugh hearing and the protests that followed. This case study exemplifies the idea that anger is a tool for social change that women are ultimately being deprived of. Conclusively, this study addresses the relationship between women's rage and democracy as well as what it would mean to de-gender anger.

I. ANGER IS GENDERED

Feeling anger involves a multitude of factors, some of which include physiology, genetics, and cognitive processing. Anger is also contextual. Our responses to stimulus often depend on who you are and why you're angry. Relationships, culture, social status, power, and privilege largely frame how we think about, experience, and utilize anger.

Anger can operate below our conscious understanding. Anger is classified a secondary emotion because it results from other feelings, such as shame or fear.¹ Unresolved anger can manifest into our bodies which may cause physical discomfort, pain, anxiety, unhappiness, and ultimately impairs our health.² Anger is generally thought of negatively, but it is actually the most helpful and forward thinking of all our emotions because it brings about transformation and manifests passion. Anger is a rational response to violation, threat, moral disorder and bridges the gap between a wrongful past and improved possibility. Expressing anger protects our interests, brings change to struggling communities, and upends failing systems.³

Anger is so important because it is often the first step to creating social change. Within almost every instance of activism you see, modern or historical, successful or not, you see a person or a group of people who experienced anger because of a perceived injustice. Anger is a crucial step to activism because it creates solidarity, makes voices heard, and highlights the passion and importance of a particular issue.

¹ Melissa Dittmann, "*Anger Across the Gender Divide*," (American Psychological Association, 2003).

² Dittmann, "*Anger Across the Gender Divide*."

³ Soraya Chemaly, *Rage Becomes Her* (Simon & Schuster UK, 2018).

Activism requires anger to be successful. As Adams notes, “in one autobiography after another we find the same story - the initial action for peace and justice is motivated by anger against injustice. Like the spark that ignites the fuel in an engine, anger is the stimulus that initiates action”.⁴ In many social movements, feelings of anger subsequently create feelings of motivation and courage, this being the very foundation of activism. Adams writes that many successful civil rights activists have transformed their anger into revolutionary change: “It was anger that transformed W.E.B. DuBois from a scholar, brilliant but ineffective in a world of exploitation and racism, into a powerful activist for civil rights..., King made it clear that anger is essential as a motive for action”.⁵

In addition to channeling motivation, anger also unites groups together for a common cause. For this reason, it is a necessary step of activism. Adams argues that “anger, unlike fear, can be harnessed by affiliation and put to work as a powerful force for social change. Rather than the emotion of a single individual setting forth into action, it becomes the battle cry of the movement”.⁶ Activists use their anger to organize. In this, their anger becomes a transforming force. As Adams concludes, “we don't need any special psychological principle to explain why activists move on to the step of affiliation: quite simply they find that the power of their action is greater when they work in a group rather than alone. As Debs concluded at the end of his life, ‘Unorganized you are

⁴ David Adams, “*The Aggression Systems: Human Aspects; Evolution; Brain Mechanisms; and Dynamics*,” (Culture of Peace, 1989).

⁵ Adams, “*The Aggression Systems*.”

⁶ Adams, “*The Aggression Systems*.”

helpless, you are held in contempt. Power comes through unity”⁷. Affiliation is more than just practical, it produces change because a purpose becomes shared. When anger is collectivized, action is effective and lasting.

Anger is a universal emotion. Everyone feels anger, but it is apparent that some are allowed to express it while others are not. When this happens, both anger and activism are experienced differently. Both men and women feel anger similarly, but there are significant differences in how society responds. Societal gender roles dictate the degree to which we can use anger effectively. This is true in personal contexts as well as in the political and social spheres.

In the gender binary in which we regrettably live, almost everything is gendered. This includes emotions, especially anger. From a young age, young girls are not taught about anger in the same way young boys are. According to the American Psychological Association, “if [boys] have a conflict on the playground, they act it out with their fists. Girls have been encouraged to keep their anger down”⁸. It is accepted when boys express their anger, but not so much for girls. From childhood, we are taught to associate anger with certain stereotypes of masculinity. Anger becomes less accessible to women because it is tied to things like power, assertiveness, violence, domination, and aggression, which are things that women are not supposed to be.

Society tells girls that anger is unpleasant, unfeminine, and inappropriate, “therefore, their anger may be misdirected in passive-aggressive maneuvers such as

⁷ Adams, *“The Aggression Systems.”*

⁸ Dittmann, *“Anger Across the Gender Divide.”*

sulking or destructive gossip”.⁹ Girls are far removed from anger because they are taught that the emotion is not appropriate for femininity. When girls do express anger, it is usually considered to be sadness, or worse, a stereotype of the mean-girl. As Chemaly notes, “by naturalizing the idea that girls and women aren’t angry but are sad, by insisting that they keep their anger to themselves, we render women’s feelings and demands mute and with little social value”.¹⁰ Removing girls from expressions of anger is a key way in which patriarchal systems oppress women. Anger remains unacceptable for girls and women because it is the first line of defense against injustice.

Anger reinforces gender expectations for men but confounds them for women. When women express anger, people respond with doubt and aggression. Women experience discrimination because of their anger. They are called crazy or irrational. If a woman expresses anger within political, professional, or institutional settings, she is violating traditional gender norms. She is thus met with aversion and hostility. The same people who would support an angry man are usually less tolerant of the same behavior in women.¹¹ The people most inclined to say that a woman is too angry most likely don’t ever care to ask why. They are interested in silence, not dialogue. A society that does not address women’s anger does not respect women.

From a young age, women are taught that their anger is something that should not be taken seriously. Women have come to know and expect mockery or ridicule as likely responses to their anger. This anticipation of negative responses is why so many women

⁹ Dittmann, “*Anger Across the Gender Divide*.”

¹⁰ Chemaly, *Rage Becomes Her*.

¹¹ Chemaly, *Rage Becomes Her*.

are silent about what they need. Women have learned to put aside feelings of anger in order to avoid conflict or penalization. In a society where male violence towards women is prevalent, there is also a possibility that a woman's anger will result in male violence. Silencing anger minimizes this risk, but at a great cost.

Women feel unexpressed anger in their bodies. Unprocessed anger intertwines itself into appearances, eating habits, and relationships. This fuels low self esteem, anxiety, depression, and physical illness. Ignoring anger makes women careless with themselves and allows society to be careless with them as well. Gendered ideas about anger make women question themselves, doubt their own feelings, set aside needs, and renounce their own capacity for moral conviction as well as bodily autonomy.

Expressing anger is a demand to be heard. When a woman is angry, she is saying that her voice matters. Through anger and believing in our own importance, we are able to engage in and shape the world around us. Anger is a tool for social change that women are ultimately being deprived of. When women's anger is silenced, what becomes of their activism?

II. THE CULT OF TRUE WOMANHOOD

To understand why women's anger is so often disregarded, it is important to note how women have been systematically silenced. Throughout history, women have been held to an unachievable standard of femininity. By cultivating this standard, society tells women that they will always be inferior beings, leaving no room for their place in activism or in the world.

Historians use the term "Cult of True Womanhood" to describe a prevailing patriarchal system seen in the nineteenth century in the U.S. For possibly the first time, ideals of femininity and the woman's role within the home were defined and enforced. Barbara Welter first advanced the idea of the "True Woman", implying that women were to express four cardinal values: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.¹² She argued that "without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power".¹³ These values trapped women of the time in the private sphere and serve to actively oppress women of the present day.

The Cult of True Womanhood placed women in the home and at the center of their families. According to Welter, women had to uphold each of the four virtues in order to be deemed a "True Woman". The first virtue, piety, taught that religion must be valued over intellectual pursuit. Religion kept women in the private sphere and controlled their desires. She notes, "one reason religion was valued was that it did not take a woman

¹² Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," (*American Quarterly*, 1966), 152.

¹³ Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," 152.

away from her 'proper sphere', her home".¹⁴ The Cult of True Womanhood stressed the idea that "no sensible woman will suffer her intellectual pursuits to clash with her domestic duties",¹⁵ explaining that women should concentrate on strictly religious pursuits.

The next virtue, purity, underlined a woman's virginity as her greatest treasure. Virginity must not be lost until marriage, and married women must remain loyal and committed to her husband. As Welter argues, "purity was as essential as piety to a young woman, its absence as unnatural and unfeminine. Without it she was, in fact, no woman at all, but a member of some lower order".¹⁶ Loss of virtue stressed that women's value was geared solely toward her body, not her mind or her capabilities.

Submissiveness is also a virtue of the "True Woman," because men were thought of as women's superiors by "God's appointment".¹⁷ Welter writes that within the Cult of True Womanhood, "whatever situation of life a woman is placed from her cradle to her grave, a spirit of obedience and submission, pliability of temper, and humility of mind, are required from her".¹⁸ A "True Woman" woman knows she is dependent. She is conscious of her inferiority to men and grateful for their support.

The last of the four virtues, domesticity, states that a woman's role was in the home, to provide solely for her husband and children. The "True Woman" was inferior to

¹⁴ Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," 153.

¹⁵ Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," 153.

¹⁶ Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," 154.

¹⁷ Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," 159.

¹⁸ Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," 159.

men in every aspect. The care of the home was what made her feminine, as well as her dependence on her husband. If anyone, male or female, dared to tamper with the complex of virtues which made up True Womanhood, he was damned immediately as an enemy of God, of civilization and of the Republic.

Becoming a “True Woman” was never achievable, it was simply a way for society to actively oppress women and sustain patriarchal systems. Despite the emergence of the Cult of True Womanhood, the nineteenth century also brought about new opportunities for women and challenged some gender stereotypes. Even so, the ideology “of what woman was and ought to be persisted, bringing guilt and confusion in the midst of opportunity”.¹⁹

The ideals of the Cult of True Womanhood were often perpetuated by popular culture, particularly in women’s magazines. The women's magazines, a product of a patriarchal society, deeply feared the dislocation of values and blurring of gender roles emerging in the nineteenth century. Welter notes “by careful manipulation and interpretation they sought to convince woman that she had the best of both worlds, power and virtue, and that a stable order of society depended upon her maintaining her traditional place in it”.²⁰ In an effort to combat progressivism, women’s magazines promoted the values of the Cult of True Womanhood.

¹⁹ Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” 174.

²⁰ Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” 174.

By the mid 1800s, women's magazines such as *Godey's Lady's Book* were widely popular and largely reflected ideals of the "True Woman".²¹ This kind of literature advised women on how to serve their homes, husbands, and children.²² Fashion and cooking articles became an important addition to these magazines because they stressed the significance of pleasing men. Illustrations in women's magazines also reiterated the four virtues and the importance of motherhood and marriage. In an effort to keep women in the private sphere, the magazines encouraged women to find fulfillment within the home.

The Cult of True Womanhood took on new form within the mid nineteenth century. Women upheld the virtues of the "True Woman" in order to create meaningful societal change. Just as it was the responsibility of a true woman to mother her children, she must also mother the community. Women of this time "wielded their maternal role to expand social authority" and became members of moral reform societies".²³ Women formed these moral reform societies to combat the effects of alcoholism, prostitution, and other societal vices of this time period.

Women's social activism of the nineteenth century reached its peak with the temperance movement.²⁴ The private nuclear family that was so essential to the cult of true womanhood was also a locale for domestic violence, sexual abuse, and female

²¹ Therese Lueck and Kathleen Endres, *Women's Periodicals in the United States*, (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995), 113.

²² Lueck and Endres, *Women's Periodicals in the United States*, 115.

²³ Ellen Carol DuBois and Lynn Dumenil, *Through Women's Eyes*, (Boston : Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005), 230.

²⁴ DuBois and Dumenil, *Through Women's Eyes*, 231.

disempowerment. Temperance focused on eliminating domestic violence caused by fervent male alcoholism. The movement frequently created anti-alcohol propaganda that depicted female victims of alcohol abuse who were the suffering wives and children of drunkards. Although women used the “True Woman” ideology to express their activism, they also faced limitations due to the Cult of True Womanhood’s strict hold on their public lives.

Temperance organizations went against some of the “True Woman” virtues in order to express female discontent within family dynamics and marital practices. As DuBois notes, “temperance activism allowed women to criticize men for their failure to live up to the marital bargain, by which wives would subordinate themselves to their husbands so long as the men were reliable breadwinners and even handed patriarchs”.²⁵ Many female activists began their reform careers within the temperance movement, such as Susan B. Anthony and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, but they received constant scrutiny and were deemed “unfeminine” because they used their voices within their activism.²⁶ Although reform movements like temperance were widely popular among women, they were heavily criticized and even thought of as detrimental to society because they went against norms set by the Cult of the True Womanhood.

The Cult of True Womanhood challenged far more than just the women of the nineteenth century. The values of the cult survived the era in which they were created and impacted all women, historical and modern. The virtues of the “True Woman” set an

²⁵ DuBois and Dumenil, *Through Women’s Eyes*, 231.

²⁶ DuBois and Dumenil, *Through Women’s Eyes*, 231.

achievable standard of femininity that has hindered female activism throughout time. Especially evident within the civil rights movement, the Cult of True Womanhood created the idea that women should, and would always be inferior. Many women of this time began to fight to end the cultural assumptions that reinforced women's subordination. With the Equal rights amendment of the 1970s, women sought to amend the constitution to prohibit the denial of legal equality on the basis of gender.²⁷ Focusing on discrimination in the workplace, the ERA was enacted as a tool to ensure economic justice for women. Discourse regarding the ERA led to the emergence of an antifeminist movement and wide opposition to women's equality under the guise of the Cult of True Womanhood.²⁸

Female activists of the 1960s and 1970s faced many obstacles within their activism because of the hold the Cult of True Womanhood had on American culture and its promotion of conformity. Opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment began over the division between public and private spheres and women's appropriate place within them. Women upholding "True Woman" virtues like Phyllis Schlafly became outspoken opponents of the Equal Rights Amendment during the 1970s. Schlafly argued that the Equal Rights Amendment would take away gender specific privileges that actually benefited women, including "dependent wife" benefits under Social Security, separate restrooms for males and females, and exemption from the military draft.²⁹ Schlafly used

²⁷ DuBois and Dumenil, *Through Women's Eyes*, 569.

²⁸ DuBois and Dumenil, *Through Women's Eyes*, 637.

²⁹ Phyllis Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?" (The Phyllis Schlafly Report, 1972).

virtues of the “True Woman” in stating that “Women’s liberation is a total assault on the role of the American woman as wife and mother, and on the family as the basic unit of society”.³⁰ Arguments like this enforced ideals of the Cult of True Womanhood and assumed that a woman’s primary role should be with her family. To further support this idea, Schlafly explained that women who supported the Equal Rights Amendment and went against the Cult of True Womanhood were “waging a total assault on the family, on marriage, and on children”.³¹

Arguments against women’s liberation and equality continue to be rooted within the ideals of the Cult of True Womanhood. The Cult of True Womanhood privatizes women’s options for work and education while condemning those who voice opinion or support reform. Arguments of significant biological gender differences support female subordination and lead to pronouncements that women are incapable of effectively participating in politics, commerce, activism, or public service. Historical notions of women have removed them from the public sphere and left them without an active voice.

³⁰ Schlafly, “*What’s Wrong with ‘Equal Rights’ for Women?*”

³¹ Schlafly, “*What’s Wrong with ‘Equal Rights’ for Women?*”

III. THE KAVANAUGH HEARINGS: A CASE STUDY

Women's anger and its significance to political activism is highlighted through the analysis of the 2018 Kavanaugh hearings and its protestors. This case study exemplifies the idea that anger is a tool of which women are ultimately being deprived of. Conclusively, this study addresses the relationship between women's rage and democracy as well as what it would mean to de-gender anger.

On July 9, 2018, President Donald Trump nominated Brett Kavanaugh for Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. Regarding his nomination to the Supreme Court, the Senate Judiciary Committee questioned Judge Kavanaugh and heard witness testimonies over a four-day hearing between September 4th and 7th. Later, Christine Blasey Ford accused Kavanaugh of sexual assault back in 1982. Because of this, the Committee postponed its vote and invited both Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford to appear at a public hearing. On September 27th, both Kavanaugh and Blasey Ford testified before the Committee. The following day, the nomination was forwarded to the full Senate on an 11-10 vote. During this process, two other women, Deborah Ramirez and Julie Swetnick, also accused Kavanaugh of past instances of sexual assault. On October 6th, after a supplemental FBI investigation into the allegations, the Senate voted 50-48 to confirm Kavanaugh's nomination to the Supreme Court.

The Kavanaugh confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee began on September 4, 2018. The hearing quickly became chaotic because of

interruptions from protesters.³² Once the hearing was underway, the nominee listened to senators' opening statements. Kavanaugh then read his own statement, in which he praised his parents, his daughters, his favorite sports teams, and professed that "I'm not a pro-prosecution or pro-defense judge. I am a pro-law judge".³³

The second and third day of the hearing began with the senators asking direct questions at Kavanaugh regarding his personal positions and general ideas.³⁴ Senators focused their questions on Kavanaugh's judicial philosophy, position on *Roe v. Wade*, and his role in programs implemented after 9/11 by the Bush administration.³⁵

Kavanaugh testified that he believed *Roe v. Wade* was "settled as a precedent of the Supreme Court", and that *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* was "precedent on precedent". He explained that he "did my level best in an emergency posture" when voting to deny a detained teenager an abortion in *Garza v. Hargan*.³⁶ Kavanaugh declined to answer many questions posed to him by the Committee. One such refusal came when he was asked to

³² Dylan Stableford, "Kavanaugh Hearing Starts with a Bang as Protesters, Dems Interrupt Opening Statements," Yahoo News, September 4, 2018, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/kavanaugh-hearing-starts-bang-protesters-dems-interrupt-opening-statements-150945260.html>

³³ Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Adam Liptak. "Kavanaugh Portrayed as a Hopeless Partisan as Hearings on Supreme Court Nominee Open." *The New York Times*, September 5, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/04/us/politics/kavanaugh-confirmation-supreme-court.html>.

³⁴ Kim et al., "Supreme Court Nominee Brett Kavanaugh Won't Commit to Removing Himself from Cases Directly Affecting Trump," *The Washington Post*, September 5, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/kavanaugh-hearing-trumps-supreme-court-nominee-faces-senate-grilling/2018/09/05/97fda1ac-b081-11e8-9a6a-565d92a3585d_story.html

³⁵ Stephanie Ebbs, "5 Key Takeaways from Brett Kavanaugh's Supreme Court Confirmation Hearing," ABC News, September 5, 2018, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/protesters-interrupt-brett-kavanaugh-confirmation-hearing-day/story?id=57617263>

³⁶ Michael D. Shear, Adam Liptak, and Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Kavanaugh Ducks Questions on Presidential Powers and Subpoenas," *The New York Times*, September 5, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/05/us/politics/brett-kavanaugh-hearing.html>

comment on Senator Richard Blumenthal's concern over President Trump's "blatant, craven and repeated attacks" on the federal judiciary, referring specifically to Trump's tweet asserting that Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg had "embarrassed all by making very dumb political statements about me. Her mind is shot - resign!".³⁷ On the fourth day, outside witnesses gave testimony to the committee on their position. On each day, Interruptions from protestors continued to be seen throughout the courtroom, and many were arrested and charged for unlawful demonstrations.

During the confirmation process, Kavanaugh was accused of sexual assault. On July 30, 2018, Christine Blasey Ford wrote a letter to the U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein that accused Kavanaugh of sexually assaulting her in the 1980s.³⁸ Ford had requested that her allegation be kept confidential.³⁹ Feinstein did not refer the allegation to the FBI until September 14, 2018,⁴⁰ after the Judiciary Committee had completed its hearings on Kavanaugh's nomination and "after leaks to the media about Ford's allegation had

³⁷ Kim Seung Min and Ann E. Marimow, "Supreme Court Nominee Declines to Condemn Trump's Attacks on Judiciary," *The Washington Post*, September 6, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/kavanaugh-hearing-trumps-supreme-court-nominee-faces-second-day-of-questioning/2018/09/06/3529677a-b147-11e8-aed9-001309990777_story.html

³⁸ Jessica Estepa and Erin Kelly, "Brett Kavanaugh: Timeline of Allegations against SCOTUS Nominee," *USA Today*, September 24, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2018/09/24/brett-kavanaugh-allegations-timeline-supreme-court/1408073002/>

³⁹ Jennifer Haberkorn, "The GOP Wants to Know Why Feinstein Didn't Come Forward Sooner with Kavanaugh Allegation," *Los Angeles Times*, September 19, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-congress-kavanaugh-feinstein-20180919-story.htm>

⁴⁰ Estepa and Kelly, "Brett Kavanaugh: Timeline of Allegations against SCOTUS Nominee."

reached a ‘fever pitch’”.⁴¹ On September 16, Ford was revealed by *The Washington Post* to be the author of the allegations against Kavanaugh.⁴²

In her report to the *Post*, Ford stated that in the early 1980s, Kavanaugh and his classmate Mark Judge “corralled” her in a bedroom at a party in Maryland. According to Ford, Kavanaugh pinned her to the bed, groped her, ground against her, tried to pull off her clothes, and covered her mouth when she tried to scream.⁴³ Ford said that she was afraid Kavanaugh “might inadvertently kill me” during the assault.⁴⁴ Ford only got away when Judge jumped on the bed, knocking them all over.⁴⁵ Ford stated that she later attended couples counseling with her husband in 2012 where she first talked about the incident. The therapist's notes said that she had stated that she was assaulted by students “from an elitist boys' school”, who eventually became “highly respected and high-ranking members of society in Washington”, although the notes do not specifically name Kavanaugh. Ford took a polygraph test with a former FBI agent, who concluded

⁴¹ Manu Raju, “Democrats Say Michael Avenatti Undercut Their Case against Brett Kavanaugh,” CNN, October 6, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/06/politics/democrats-avenatti-swetnick-accusation/index.html>

⁴² Emma Brown, “California Professor Christine Blasey Ford, Writer of Confidential Brett Kavanaugh Letter, Speaks out about Sexual Assault Allegation,” *The Washington Post*, September 16, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/california-professor-writer-of-confidential-brett-kavanaugh-letter-speaks-out-about-her-allegation-of-sexual-assault/2018/09/16/46982194-b846-11e8-94eb-3bd52dfe917b_story.html

⁴³ Jason Breslow and Sasha Ingber, “Calls Grow To Delay Kavanaugh Vote After Accuser Goes Public,” NPR, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/09/16/648535858/democrats-calls-to-delay-kavanaugh-vote-after-his-accuser-goes-public>

⁴⁴ Haley Miller, “Brett Kavanaugh Accuser Goes Public: ‘I Thought He Might Inadvertently Kill Me’,” HuffPost, September 16, 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/brett-kavanaugh-sexual-assault-letter-author_n_5b9e93d9e4b04d32ebf979c3

⁴⁵ Emma Brown, “California Professor Christine Blasey Ford, Writer of Confidential Brett Kavanaugh Letter, Speaks out about Sexual Assault Allegation.”

Ford was being truthful when she endorsed a statement summarizing her allegations as accurate.⁴⁶

Kavanaugh issued a statement on September 17, denying Ford's allegations, saying he has “never done anything like what the accuser describes - to her or to anyone”.⁴⁷ President Trump commented on the sexual assault allegations against Brett Kavanaugh for the first time on September 17, 2018, saying, “Judge Kavanaugh is one of the finest people that I've ever known. He's an outstanding intellect, an outstanding judge, respected by everybody. Never had even a little blemish on his record. The FBI has, I think, gone through a process six times with him over the years, where he went to higher and higher positions. He is somebody very special”.⁴⁸ The president expressed confidence in Kavanaugh and stated that he would not withdraw the nomination, though he did acknowledge that there might be a “little delay”.⁴⁹

Several senators requested that the committee should hear from Ford before the vote to send the Kavanaugh nomination to the Senate floor for final consideration.⁵⁰ The

⁴⁶ Brown, “California Professor Christine Blasey Ford, Writer of Confidential Brett Kavanaugh Letter, Speaks out about Sexual Assault Allegation.”

⁴⁷ Haley Britzky, “How We Got Here,” Axios, October 2, 2018, <https://www.axios.com/brett-kavanaugh-timeline-allegations-vote-412d33d6-e5dd-43eb-9322-fd2a3867be9b.html>

⁴⁸ Ian Schwartz, “Trump Backs Kavanaugh: ‘One Of The Finest People I’ve Ever Known,’ One Of The Great Intellectuals,” Real Clear Politics, September 17, 2018, https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2018/09/17/trump_backs_kavanaugh_one_of_the_finest_people_ive_ever_known_one_of_the_great_intellects.html

⁴⁹ Christina Wilkie, “Trump on Kavanaugh,” CNBC, September 17, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/09/17/trump-on-kavanaugh-if-it-takes-a-little-delay-thats-ok-.html>

⁵⁰ Elana Schor, Rebecca Morin, and Everett Burgess, “Senate Panel Plans Hearing for Kavanaugh’s Accuser to Testify,” Politico, September 17, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/09/17/christine-blasey-ford-testify-congress-826078>

hearing on sexual abuse allegations began on September 27th, 2018 and featured just two witnesses, Kavanaugh and Ford. Republican members of the committee said they would not question the witnesses directly and instead enlisted Rachel Mitchell, a Phoenix sex crimes prosecutor, to question the witnesses on their behalf.⁵¹ Mitchell questioned Ford in five-minute segments, alternating with five-minute segments from the Democratic members of the committee. Mitchell did not question Kavanaugh, as most of the Republicans took back their time and used it to defend Kavanaugh.

The session began with statements by Republican Senator Grassley and Democratic Senator Feinstein. Ford then described the events leading up to the incident. She said that she and her friend Leland Keyser went to a small gathering with Kavanaugh and his friends, including Mark Judge, Patrick “PJ” Smyth and another boy whose name she did not recall. She stated that Kavanaugh and Judge were visibly drunk when she arrived. Ford said she was pushed into a bedroom by Judge and Kavanaugh before Kavanaugh pinned her down to the bed as he aggressively groped and attempted to unclothed her. Ford said she was eventually able to escape and recalled both Kavanaugh and Judge laughing as she ran away. She stated that she felt ashamed afterwards and kept quiet about the assault until a counseling session in 2012. She said the assault had always

⁵¹ Emily Tillet, Kathryn Watson, and Grace Segers, “Brett Kavanaugh Hearing,” CBS News, September 27, 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/live-news/brett-kavanaugh-hearing-live-testimony-today-after-dr-ford-sexual-assault-allegations-2018-09-27/>

been “seared into my memory and haunted me episodically as an adult” and also that she felt it was her civic duty to testify.⁵²

Democrats entered into the record thousands of letters of support for Ford from her former classmates, other alumni, colleagues, students, mentors and 50 Yale Law School faculty members. They also noted that Ford passed a polygraph test. Mitchell asked a number of probing questions, including if Ford had anything to drink or was on any medication during the party and if she was given advice before taking the polygraph test. She also contrasted Ford's record of flying with her stated fear of flying.⁵³ In the months following her testimony, Ford was flooded with death threats that forced her to leave her own home and made her unable to return to work. She additionally had to hire private security.⁵⁴

Kavanaugh denied the allegations “immediately, categorically and unequivocally.” He said that Ford's friend Keyser had no recollection of the incident and that the committee should “think about that”. However, Keyser stated that she did believe Ford's allegation, she just simply could not recall all the happenings at the gathering from over 36 years ago. Kavanaugh furiously condemned the Democrats for criticizing his record and called the confirmation process a “national disgrace” that had “ruined my

⁵² Anthony Zurcher, “Key Takeaways from the Day’s Testimony,” *BBC News*, September 27, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45660297>

⁵³ Gregory Krieg, “The Moments That Defined the Christine Blasey Ford-Brett Kavanaugh Hearing,” *CNN Politics*, September 27, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/09/27/politics/blasey-ford-kavanaugh-hearing-notable-moments/index.html>

⁵⁴ Tim Mak, “Kavanaugh Accuser Christine Blasey Ford Continues Receiving Threats, Lawyers Say,” *NPR*, November 8, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/08/665407589/kavanaugh-accuser-christine-blasey-ford-continues-receiving-threats-lawyers-say>

good name”. He spoke extensively about his schooling, where he “focused on academics and athletics, going to church every Sunday at Little Flower, working on my service projects, and friendship with classmates and with girls from the local all-girls Catholic schools”.⁵⁵

Democrats then brought up Kavanaugh's high school yearbook page, which boasted of “Keg City Club (Treasurer) - 100 Kegs or Bust” and also referenced Mark Judge's memoir: “Wasted, Tales of a Gen X Drunk”. Senator Amy Klobuchar asked about his drinking habits and in response to this Kavanaugh said he “liked beer” and then asked if she had a drinking problem before denying having one himself. Two of his Yale classmates later told CNN that he did in fact have a drinking problem, with one describing Kavanaugh as a “stumbling drunk.” Democrats further questioned Kavanaugh about the terms “boofed” and “devil's triangle” in his yearbook page, which Kavanaugh said only referred to flatulence and a drinking game. Additionally, Kavanaugh consistently refused to answer whether or not he would consent to an FBI investigation.⁵⁶

During the day, an estimated 1,200-plus protesters poured into Senate office buildings on Capitol Hill in support of Ford. Afterward, the Judiciary Committee

⁵⁵ Jack Crowe, “Brett Kavanaugh: My Family’s Reputation Has Been ‘Permanently Destroyed’,” *National Review*, September 27, 2018, <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/brett-kavanaugh-my-familys-reputation-has-been-permanently-destroyed/>

⁵⁶ Bloomberg Government, “Kavanaugh Hearing Transcript,” *The Washington Post*, September 27, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/national/wp/2018/09/27/kavanaugh-hearing-transcript/>

announced that the committee would vote on the nomination the following day, September 28th.⁵⁷

During this process, more women came forward accusing Kavanaugh of sexual misconduct. Deborah Ramirez made a second sexual assault allegation against Kavanaugh. The alleged incident occurred in 1983 when Kavanaugh and Ramirez were both students at Yale University. Within *The New Yorker*'s report of her account, an inebriated Kavanaugh "thrust his penis in her face, and caused her to touch it without her consent as she pushed him away", before pulling his pants back up and laughing at Ramirez.⁵⁸ *The New Yorker* also reported that one of Ramirez's classmates had heard about the incident within two days of its supposed happening, and "independently recalled many of the same details offered by Ramirez".⁵⁹

A third allegation of sexual assault against Kavanaugh was also announced.⁶⁰ Julie Swetnick released a sworn statement alleging that she had witnessed Kavanaugh and Mark Judge trying to get teenage girls "inebriated and disoriented so they could then

⁵⁷ Ted Barrett, Clare Foran, and Kristen Wilson, "Republican Senators Say Brett Kavanaugh Committee Vote to Go on as Scheduled Friday," CNN Politics, September 28, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/09/27/politics/senators-meet-brett-kavanaugh-supreme-court/index.html>

⁵⁸ Ronan Farrow and Jane Mayer, "Senate Democrats Investigate a New Allegation of Sexual Misconduct, from the Supreme Court Nominee Brett Kavanaugh's College Years, by His Yale Classmate Deborah Ramirez," *The New Yorker*, September 24, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/senate-democrats-investigate-a-new-allegation-of-sexual-misconduct-from-the-supreme-court-nominee-brett-kavanaughs-college-years-deborah-ramirez>

⁵⁹ Farrow and Mayer, "Senate Democrats Investigate a New Allegation of Sexual Misconduct, from the Supreme Court Nominee Brett Kavanaugh's College Years, by His Yale Classmate Deborah Ramirez."

⁶⁰ Joana Walters, "Brett Kavanaugh: Third Woman Expected to Make Accusations of Sexual Misconduct," *The Guardian*, September 24, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/sep/24/brett-kavanaugh-third-woman-expected-to-make-accusations-of-sexual-misconduct>

be gang raped in a side room or bedroom by a ‘train’ of numerous boys”.⁶¹ Swetnick also alleged Kavanaugh and Judge were both present when she was the victim of one such gang rape.⁶² Following Swetnick’s allegation, many claims were made about its lack of support or reliable witnesses.

After news of some inaccuracies and lack of evidence, several Democratic senators stated that the Swetnick accusation “gave Republicans an opportunity to shift the narrative away from Ford's allegations and make a broader case that the growing accusations of sexual misconduct amounted to an orchestrated Democratic smear campaign”.⁶³ Senator Susan Collins called the Swetnick allegation “outlandish... [without] any credible supporting evidence”,⁶⁴ and ended up supporting Kavanaugh's nomination. Senator Gary Peters stated that the allegation “turns it into a circus atmosphere and certainly that's not where we should be”.⁶⁵ Swetnick’s lawyer replied to these remarks, criticizing anonymous Democrats as “cowards”, arguing that this showed “failed leadership” in the Democratic Party.⁶⁶ Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley even referred Swetnick and her lawyer for criminal investigation, claiming they

⁶¹ Michael D. Shear and Nicholas Fandos, “Before Kavanaugh Hearing, New Accusations and Doubts Emerge,” *The New York Times*, September 26, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/26/us/politics/kavanaugh-calendar.html>

⁶² Emily Stewart, “Julie Swetnick Brings New Allegations against Brett Kavanaugh,” *Vox*, September 26, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/9/26/17905908/julie-swetnick-michael-avenatti-twitter-brett-kavanaugh>

⁶³ Raju, “Democrats Say Michael Avenatti Undercut Their Case against Brett Kavanaugh.”

⁶⁴ Raju, “Democrats Say Michael Avenatti Undercut Their Case against Brett Kavanaugh.”

⁶⁵ Raju, “Democrats Say Michael Avenatti Undercut Their Case against Brett Kavanaugh.”

⁶⁶ Raju, “Democrats Say Michael Avenatti Undercut Their Case against Brett Kavanaugh.”

made potentially false statements. Swetnick's team responded by tweeting that they "welcomed the investigation".⁶⁷

When the Judiciary Committee convened to deliberate on whether to send Kavanaugh's nomination to the full Senate for final approval on September 28, 2018, Richard Blumenthal made a motion to subpoena Mark Judge to testify about Christine Blasey Ford's alleged sexual assault, saying, "Judge has never been interviewed by the FBI. He has never been questioned by any member of our committee". The motion was defeated, as every Republican on the committee voted against it.⁶⁸ Following the vote, Blumenthal, along with fellow Democrats Mazie Hirono, Kamala Harris, and Sheldon Whitehouse, staged a brief walkout in protest.⁶⁹ After extensive debate, the committee voted 11-10 to send the Kavanaugh nomination to the full Senate with a favorable recommendation. All Republican members voted in favor of the motion and all Democratic members voted against it.

The Judiciary Committee then announced that the Senate vote on Kavanaugh's confirmation would be delayed for one week to allow for a "supplemental FBI background investigation" into the "credible allegations of sexual misconduct against the

⁶⁷ Kim Seung Min and Elise Viebeck, "Grassley Refers Avenatti and Swetnick to Justice for a Criminal Probe," *The Washington Post*, November 8, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>

⁶⁸ "Senate Judiciary Committee Rejects Subpoenaing Mark Judge," *The Washington Post*, September 28, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/senate-committee-rejects-subpoenaing-mark-judge/2018/09/28/b6a2cf08-c326-11e8-9451-e878f96be19b_video.html

⁶⁹ Tucker Higgins, "Republican Senators Defeat Motion to Subpoena Mark Judge to Testify about Blasey Ford's Sexual Misconduct Allegation against Brett Kavanaugh," CNBC, September 28, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/09/28/republican-senators-vote-down-motion-to-subpoena-mark-judge-to-testify.html>

nominee” raised during the hearings.⁷⁰ Several other senators, including Republicans Lisa Murkowski, Susan Collins, and Democrat Joe Manchin, voiced their support for the delay. Dianne Feinstein, the senior Democrat on the committee, who along with Chris Coons had been advocating for an FBI investigation, supported the delay, calling it “the best way to ensure a fair process to both Kavanaugh and Ford”. In response, the president opened up a “limited” investigation into the accusations.⁷¹

On September 29th, 2018, it was confirmed that the FBI was looking into the second allegations by Ramirez.⁷² Other individuals had spoken to the FBI about the case, such as a classmate of Kavanaugh's from Yale, detailing claims of “violent drunk behavior by Kavanaugh in college”⁷³ and claims that Kavanaugh lied about the extent of his drinking during the hearing.⁷⁴ NBC News reported that the White House had set several strict parameters for the investigation; these included heavy restrictions on investigating Mark Judge and limiting the investigation to looking into only Ford's and

⁷⁰ Nicholas Fandos and Sheryl Gay Stolberg, “Trump Agrees to Open ‘Limited’ F.B.I. Investigation Into Accusations Against Kavanaugh,” *The New York Times*, September 28 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/28/us/politics/brett-kavanaugh-senate-judiciary.html>

⁷¹ Fandos and Stolberg, “Trump Agrees to Open ‘Limited’ F.B.I. Investigation Into Accusations Against Kavanaugh.”

⁷² Ariane de Vogue and Jeff Zeleny, “FBI Spoke with Deborah Ramirez, Second Kavanaugh Accuser,” CNN Politics, September 30, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/09/30/politics/deborah-ramirez-fbi-kavanaugh/index.html>

⁷³ “Chad Ludington’s Statement on Kavanaugh’s Drinking and Senate Testimony,” *The New York Times*, September 30, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/30/us/politics/chad-ludington-statement-brett-kavanaugh.html>

⁷⁴ Ken Dilanian and Adam Edelman, “Yale Classmate to Tell FBI of Brett Kavanaugh’s ‘violent Drunken’ Behavior,” NBC News, October 1, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/supreme-court/kavanaugh-classmate-tell-fbi-nominee-s-violent-drunken-behavior-college-n915326>

Ramirez's allegations; looking into Swetnick's was blocked.⁷⁵ This report led to widespread controversy; Swetnick's lawyer responded by calling the report "outrageous" and vowing to "take the facts to the American people" if Swetnick was not included in the investigation.⁷⁶

The president later denied the report, stating "I want them to interview whoever they deem appropriate, at their discretion".⁷⁷ The White House followed up on this by stating that it was not restricting the investigation but that the investigation should not become a "fishing expedition".⁷⁸ However, on September 30, it was confirmed by *The New York Times* that the restrictions were still in effect due to the parameters set by White House counsel Don McGahn. The article also stated that the investigation had been restricted to only 4 individuals that could be interviewed: Judge, Ramirez, Leland Keyser, and P. J. Smyth. Access was denied to Swetnick and to any of Kavanaugh's classmates

⁷⁵ Ken Dilanian, Geoff Bennett, and Kristen Welker, "Limits to FBI's Kavanaugh Investigation Have Not Changed, despite Trump's Comments," NBC News, September 29, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/white-house-limits-scope-fbi-s-investigation-allegations-against-brett-n915061>

⁷⁶ Paul Steinhauser, "Avenatti Vows to 'Take the Facts' to the American People If FBI's Kavanaugh Investigation Doesn't Include His Client," The Daily Beast, September 30, 2018, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/avenatti-vows-to-take-the-facts-to-the-american-people-if-fbis-kavanaugh-probe-doesnt-include-his-client>

⁷⁷ Dilanian, Bennett, and Welker, "Limits to FBI's Kavanaugh Investigation Have Not Changed, despite Trump's Comments."

⁷⁸ Mike DeBonis, "Fight over Kavanaugh Intensifies amid Confusion over Limits of FBI Sexual Assault Investigation," *The Washington Post*, September 30, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/administration-says-white-house-is-not-limiting-fbi-probe-of-kavanaugh-but-is-against-fishing-expedition/2018/09/30/aa7b796e-c4bb-11e8-b1ed-1d2d65b86d0c_story.html

who previously stated that he drank heavily. In response to the reports, Feinstein called for the White House and FBI to release the scope of the investigation.⁷⁹

The New York Times reported on October 1, 2018 that the White House had authorized the FBI to expand its investigation and interview “anybody they want within reason”.⁸⁰ On interviewing Swetnick, Trump stated “It wouldn’t bother me at all. Now I don’t know all three of the accusers. Certainly I imagine they’re going to interview two. The third one I don’t know much about”.⁸¹ Despite this, later reports continued stating that the FBI had not contacted many people due to the White House restrictions, including Ford and Kavanaugh themselves.⁸²

On October 5, the Senate voted 51-49 for cloture; a procedural vote that brought debate to an end and allowed the Senate to move forward on the Kavanaugh nomination. The vote was almost entirely along party lines, with the exception of Democrat Joe Manchin, who voted yes, and Republican Lisa Murkowski, who voted no.⁸³ On the eve of

⁷⁹ Dianne Feinstein, “Feinstein to White House, FBI,” United States Senator for California, September 30, 2018, <https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2018/9/feinstein-to-white-house-fbi-release-scope-of-kavanaugh-investigation>

⁸⁰ Peter Baker and Michael S. Schmidt, “White House Tells F.B.I. to Interview Anyone Necessary for Kavanaugh Inquiry,” *The New York Times*, October 1, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/01/us/politics/trump-fbi-kavanaugh.html>

⁸¹ Baker and Schmidt, “White House Tells F.B.I. to Interview Anyone Necessary for Kavanaugh Inquiry.”

⁸² Leigh Ann Caldwell and Heidi Przybyla, “FBI Has Not Contacted Dozens of Potential Sources in Kavanaugh Investigation,” NBC News, October 3, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/supreme-court/dozens-potential-sources-information-have-not-been-contacted-fbi-kavanaugh-n916146>

⁸³ Beatrice Jin and David Kihara, “Kavanaugh Cloture Vote Count: Here’s How Senators Voted,” Politico, October 5, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/interactives/2018/brett-kavanaugh-senate-cloture-vote-count/>

the cloture vote, Kavanaugh published an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* saying that he might have been too emotional at times in part due to his overwhelming frustration at being wrongly accused and that there were a few things he should not have said, but that going forward he would be an independent, impartial judge.⁸⁴

Hours after his Senate confirmation, Kavanaugh was sworn in at a private ceremony, followed by a public ceremony in the White House on October 7th. Chief Justice John Roberts administered the constitutional oath and retired Justice Anthony Kennedy administered the judicial oath. Also in attendance were officials that had supported Kavanaugh's nomination, the justice's wife, children and parents and four of the sitting Judges, while three were unable to attend due to previous engagements. President Trump spoke thanking those in attendance and then apologized to Kavanaugh and his family for “the terrible pain and suffering you have been forced to endure”, calling the Senate hearing “a campaign of political and personal destruction based on lies and deception”.⁸⁵ Justice Kavanaugh spoke thanking his family, friends, and those that had supported his nomination. He thanked President Trump for his “steadfast and unwavering support” and several Republican senators, including Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senator Susan Collins, who cast what was considered the deciding vote in his favor. He also thanked the only Democrat who voted for him, Sen. Joe Manchin III

⁸⁴ Brett Kavanaugh, “I Am an Independent, Impartial Judge,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 4, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181005165659/https://www.wsj.com/articles/i-am-an-independent-impartial-judge-1538695822>

⁸⁵ Office of the White House Press Secretary, “Transcript: Donald Trump’s Apology, Brett Kavanaugh Remarks at Ceremonial Swearing-in.” *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 4, 2018, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2018/10/8/18482683/transcript-remarks-of-trump-kavanaugh-at-ceremonial-swearing-in>

of West Virginia. He closed by saying, “as a Justice on the Supreme Court, I will always strive to preserve the Constitution of the United States and the American rule of law”.⁸⁶

The analysis of the Kavanaugh hearings and its protesters illustrates consummately that when women’s anger, activism, and voices are disregarded, democracy is threatened. At stake here was a potential lifetime appointment to the Supreme Court that could dictate decades worth of legal rulings, impact the rights of many, and affect the way the judiciary system is perceived. Ford’s testimony, along with hundreds of women and organizations protesting the nomination, were ultimately overlooked. In this, women’s activism was ignored and thus a sexual predator was allowed to take on a position of power that would govern over and impact even more women’s lives, as well as the rest of the nation.

Ford’s testimony was powerful, credible, and brave. In it, Ford stated, “I am here today not because I want to be, I am terrified”.⁸⁷ She answered every question and recited her memories of the assault in excruciating detail. The floor plan of the house, being ambushed on her way to the bathroom at the party, the sound of laughter as Kavanaugh forced her onto the bed, tried to remove her clothes, and covered her mouth when she tried to scream for help. When pressed about her recollections, Ford explained how norepinephrine and epinephrine encodes in the hippocampus, her language reminding listeners of her Ph.D. in psychology and solidifying her integrity. When asked if she was

⁸⁶ Office of the White House Press Secretary, “Transcript: Donald Trump’s Apology, Brett Kavanaugh Remarks at Ceremonial Swearing-in.”

⁸⁷Haley Edwards, “How Christine Blasey Ford’s Testimony Changed America,” *Time*, October 4, 2018, <https://time.com/5415027/christine-blasey-ford-testimony/>

sure that it was Kavanaugh who attacked her, Ford did not hesitate and replied, “one hundred percent”.⁸⁸

Through her powerful testimony, Ford began to replace Kavanaugh as the protagonist in the narrative of the nomination. Women began to tell their own stories of sexual assault and harrassment. The hashtag #WhyIDidntReport trended on social media, a rallying moment for those who had never gone public about their own experiences with sexual assault before. Women across the world watched the testimony, hands over hearts, mouths agape. Many protested the nomination with slogans like “I Believe Christine Blasey Ford”, showing solidarity.⁸⁹ Ford’s testimony was an invitation for women to speak up, no matter how powerful the accused, no matter how long ago the attack.⁹⁰

Support for Ford was prevalent, and it was revealed that more than 1,000 alumni of Ford's high school had signed a letter in support of Ford's call for a “thorough and independent investigation” before she testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee. The letter also stated that the school has a long history of similar incidents. Many contributors also described themselves as survivors, who either heard about or experienced sexual abuse occuring at the school.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Edwards, “How Christine Blasey Ford’s Testimony Changed America.”

⁸⁹ Edwards, “How Christine Blasey Ford’s Testimony Changed America.”

⁹⁰ Edwards, “How Christine Blasey Ford’s Testimony Changed America.”

⁹¹ Kassie Hunt and Rebecca Shabad, “Kavanaugh: I Will Attend Monday Hearing ‘so That I Can Clear My Name’,” NBC News, September 20, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/kavanaugh-preps-senate-testimony-assault-allegations-n911441>

Patti Davis, an actress, author, and the daughter of Ronald Reagan, also wrote in support of Ford. Davis writes how she was sexually assaulted around 40 years ago and she “never told anyone for decades” due to shame over her own inaction to stop the assault. Davis aligned the gaps in Ford's memories with her own experience of “how memory works in a traumatic event”. The haunting memory of the actual sexual assault remained with Davis even while the other details of the event were forgotten.⁹²

Anita Hill wrote for *The New York Times* in which she compared her accusations of sexual harassment against Clarence Thomas in 1991 to the accusations against Kavanaugh. She wrote, “[that] the Senate Judiciary Committee still lacks a protocol for vetting sexual harassment and assault claims that surface during a confirmation hearing suggests that the committee has learned little from the Thomas hearing, much less the more recent #MeToo movement”.⁹³ She advocated for improvements to the ways in which sexual assault accusations are handled, and wrote, “the details of what that process would look like should be guided by experts who have devoted their careers to understanding sexual violence. The job of the Senate Judiciary Committee is to serve as fact-finders, to better serve the American public, and the weight of the government should not be used to destroy the lives of witnesses who are called to testify”.⁹⁴

⁹² Davis, “Opinion | I Was Sexually Assaulted. Here’s Why I Don’t Remember Many of the Details,” *The Washington Post*, September 21, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/i-was-sexually-assaulted-heres-why-i-dont-remember-many-of-the-details/2018/09/21/8ce0088c-bdab-11e8-8792-78719177250f_story.html

⁹³ Anita Hill, “Opinion | Anita Hill: How to Get the Kavanaugh Hearings Right,” *The New York Times*, September 18, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/18/opinion/anita-hill-brett-kavanaugh-clarence-thomas.html>

⁹⁴ Hill, “Opinion | Anita Hill: How to Get the Kavanaugh Hearings Right.”

Ford spoke with the *Washington Post*, describing her reluctance to go public with her accusation, given the likeliness that Kavanaugh would be confirmed anyway. She asked, “why suffer through the annihilation if it’s not going to matter?”⁹⁵ Inevitably, she received unimaginable backlash. Ford and her family have been driven from their home, received numerous death threats, and forced to hire private security guards. Critics have smeared her name, labeled her as a two-bit political operative, and made degrading remarks about her sexual history. Her name will forever be associated with perhaps the worst moment of her life. Despite knowing this, she chose to speak up anyway, out of what she saw as civic duty.⁹⁶ Here, Ford demonstrates how courageously powerful women’s anger can be. Ford’s testimony organized anger amongst women, a catalyst for activism. However, how Ford would later be perceived, treated in the halls of power, and her reception by the media, would send the message to countless women wrestling with whether they should speak up that their anger would not change the process.

Some GOP Senators dismissed Ford’s recollections as false memories in their public remarks. Senator Orrin Hatch, who had previously spoken out against Anita Hill’s 1991 testimony, saying “there are a lot of things that just don’t make sense to me”, and “some of it just doesn’t square with what I think is basic reality and common sense”, also spoke out against Ford, saying that her memory of events was “mixed up”.⁹⁷ President

⁹⁵ Edwards, “How Christine Blasey Ford’s Testimony Changed America.”

⁹⁶ Edwards, “How Christine Blasey Ford’s Testimony Changed America.”

⁹⁷ David Gilmour, “Orrin Hatch Attempts to Discredit Christine Blasey Ford, Just like He Did Anita Hill,” *The Daily Dot*, September 18, 2018, <https://www.dailydot.com/debug/sen-orrin-hatch-brett-kavanaugh-christine-blasey-ford/>

Trump also condemned Ford at a Mississippi campaign rally, mocking her inability to remember the exact location of the house or which day the attack allegedly took place. He warned that the idea that Kavanaugh's nomination could fail because of an old allegation is "very dangerous for our country".⁹⁸ Similarly to how the multiple sexual assault allegations against Trump were not a deal breaker to his 2016 presidential campaign, many voters also thought Ford's allegations, regardless if they were true, were not necessarily enough to force Kavanaugh to withdraw from consideration.⁹⁹

As Ford galvanized protesters, Kavanaugh's defenders began to cast him as the victim. Victoria Belk of Liberty University spoke at a pro-Kavanaugh rally, saying "this could happen to any male who has been in a room with a woman alone because the story has not been corroborated. Any woman can ruin a man's life".¹⁰⁰ John Cornyn of Texas, the second highest-ranking Senate Republican, said that everyone should be able to sympathize with Kavanaugh: "Every female's got a father, some have a husband, some have a son, I would think they would want those people treated fairly just like we want Dr. Ford treated fairly".¹⁰¹

Kavanaugh's testimony read like a Rorschach: where accusers saw intemperance, supporters saw justified outrage and the characteristics of what a powerful man should be.¹⁰² Contrasting Ford's strong testimony, Kavanaugh yelled, cried and contorted his face

⁹⁸ Edwards, "How Christine Blasey Ford's Testimony Changed America."

⁹⁹ Edwards, "How Christine Blasey Ford's Testimony Changed America."

¹⁰⁰ Edwards, "How Christine Blasey Ford's Testimony Changed America."

¹⁰¹ Edwards, "How Christine Blasey Ford's Testimony Changed America."

¹⁰² Edwards, "How Christine Blasey Ford's Testimony Changed America."

into a number of grotesque expressions as he pleaded his innocence. Kavanaugh's temperament was inappropriate, overemotional, condescending, and passive aggressive. Here, a double standard that exists within anger is shown. Society accepts violent and aggressive expressions of anger in men, whereas women are not allowed to express anger at all. Throughout the hearings, Ford remained calm and articulate within her anger. Still, she was criticized and her reputation was harmed. Comparing this to Kavanaugh's ridiculous display of uncontrollable anger reveals that women and men cannot express anger in the same way. Kavanaugh was allowed to display his anger in a way that no woman would ever have gotten away with. Kavanaugh's anger was immature and disturbing, yet many found these qualities to be that of a political hero.

Many government officials and people in positions of power openly supported Kavanaugh's nomination. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell stated his intent to support the nomination, explaining that Kavanaugh was "highly regarded throughout the legal community". Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Chuck Grassley also supported Kavanaugh, calling him "one of the most qualified Supreme Court nominees to come before the Senate".¹⁰³ Yale Law School professor Akhil Reed Amar, an expert on constitutional law, called Kavanaugh's nomination Trump's "finest hour, his classiest move". Amar also remarked that Kavanaugh "commands wide and deep respect among scholars, lawyers, and jurists".¹⁰⁴ Additionally, Robert S. Bennett, an attorney who

¹⁰³ Nicole Darrah, "Kavanaugh Nomination to Supreme Court Cheered by Conservatives," Fox News, July 9, 2018, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/kavanaugh-nomination-to-supreme-court-cheered-by-conservatives>

¹⁰⁴ Akhil Reed Amar, "Opinion | A Liberal's Case for Brett Kavanaugh," *The New York Times*, July 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/09/opinion/brett-kavanaugh-supreme-court-trump.html>

represented President Bill Clinton during the Lewinsky scandal, also stated that he supported Kavanaugh's confirmation.¹⁰⁵

At a Las Vegas rally, Trump again strongly endorsed Kavanaugh, stating that “Brett Kavanaugh is one of the finest human beings you will ever have the privilege of knowing or meeting”.¹⁰⁶ Trump responded to Democrats' insistence of an FBI investigation by asking why wasn't the FBI notified of the alleged sexual assault 36 years ago. He added, “so we'll let it play out, and I think everything is going to be just fine. This is a high-quality person”.¹⁰⁷ At another rally, Trump criticized Ford, stating that her accusation had left a man's life in tatters.¹⁰⁸

Despite the surprising amount of support for Kavanaugh, a number of Senate Democrats, including Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, stated their intent to oppose Kavanaugh's confirmation shortly after it was announced.¹⁰⁹ An open letter rebuking Yale Law School over a press release celebrating Kavanaugh's nomination was

¹⁰⁵ Josh Gerstein, “Clinton Lawyer Backs Kavanaugh,” Politico, September 5, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/blogs/under-the-radar/2018/08/29/clinton-lawyer-bob-bennett-endorses-brett-kavanaugh-801343>

¹⁰⁶ Steve Holland, “At Las Vegas Rally, Trump Backs Kavanaugh, Treads Carefully around Accusations,” Reuters, September 21, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-vegas-idUSKCN1M1097>

¹⁰⁷ Holland, “At Las Vegas Rally, Trump Backs Kavanaugh, Treads Carefully Around Accusations.”

¹⁰⁸ “Republicans Deplore Trump Mocking Accuser,” *BBC News*, October 3, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45736951>

¹⁰⁹ Darrah, “Kavanaugh Nomination to Supreme Court Cheered by Conservatives.”

signed by over 600 of its alumni.¹¹⁰ The American Civil Liberties Union stated that Kavanaugh's record “demonstrates hostility to international law as a constraint on government action as well as an unwillingness to hold the government to account when it violates the constitutional and human rights of U.S. citizens and noncitizens” and that his “approach would give the president exceedingly broad and dangerous powers”.¹¹¹

Additionally, a number of progressive groups launched a campaign known as #WhipTheVote to rally opposition to Kavanaugh's nomination. A statement from the campaign's website explained that “democratic senators should be united in opposition to Kavanaugh, instead of letting Republican senators ram through the confirmation of a nominee who was selected to protect the president from prosecution”.¹¹² Like this, Yale Law School students staged a sit-in at the law school in protest against the nomination of Kavanaugh, with some professors canceling classes to accommodate the sit-in and not penalize the students.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Yale Law School, “Brett Kavanaugh '90 Nominated to U.S. Supreme Court” Yale Law, July 9, 2018, <https://law.yale.edu/yys-today/news/brett-kavanaugh-90-nominated-us-supreme-court>

¹¹¹ Hina Shamsi, “On National Security, Kavanaugh Has a History of Extreme Deference to the President,” American Civil Liberties Union, September 2 2018, <https://www.aclu.org/blog/national-security/national-security-kavanaugh-has-history-extreme-deference-president>

¹¹² Igor Bobic, “Progressive Groups Launch Campaign Aimed At Uniting Democrats Against Brett Kavanaugh,” HuffPost, August 27, 2018, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/brett-kavanaugh-progressives-supreme-court_n_5b8401d8e4b072951514c047?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9lbi53aWtpcGVkaWEub3JnLw&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAMM4J5Koh9SBcfoa1DFKjpZv1JtwY2WhF-Lizj8xaroA0dOXY2_DxSCWcM5egMd4Pu0N_L9GQiCD4SAk38HUaPlXNLqTX4T1st7yiJmEUDc97Awlu0Kz74Gm_0EmhdXmODpd1g06aZIK12Pzqp4ksKdSlbcL7QQRQ4J2QII42ICb

¹¹³ Caleb Parke, “Yale Law School Professors Cancel Class as Students Protest Kavanaugh Nomination,” Fox News, September 24, 2018, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/yale-law-school-professors-cancel-class-as-students-protest-kavanaugh-nomination>

Some who were initially in support of Kavanaugh's nomination revoked their support after Ford's testimony. Benjamin Wittes, an official at the Brookings Institution and the Hoover Institution, initially expressed support for Kavanaugh but then withdrew his backing after Ford and Kavanaugh's testimony before the Senate, finding Ford "wholly credible" and Kavanaugh's account not credible at all on his drinking habits, and his performance improper and "unacceptable in a justice".¹¹⁴ Former Supreme Court justice John Paul Stevens stated that he once thought Kavanaugh "had the qualifications for the Supreme Court should he be selected," but that "his performance in the hearings ultimately changed my mind".¹¹⁵

Like this, many groups and organizations condemned Kavanaugh after his testimony. More than 2,400 American law professors signed a letter opposing Kavanaugh's confirmation on the basis of his "intemperate, inflammatory and partial manner" during his congressional testimony, without citing any of the accusations about his sexual misconduct decades earlier.¹¹⁶ The interdenominational National Council of Churches released a statement saying that Kavanaugh "possesses neither the temperament

¹¹⁴ Benjamin Wittes, "I Know Brett Kavanaugh, but I Wouldn't Confirm Him," *The Atlantic*, October 7, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/10/why-i-wouldnt-confirm-brett-kavanaugh/571936/>

¹¹⁵ Robert Barnes, "Retired Justice Stevens Calls Kavanaugh's Hearing Performance Disqualifying." *The Washington Post*, October 4, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/courts_law/retired-justice-stevens-calls-kavanaughs-hearing-performance-disqualifying/2018/10/04/70c4a36e-c81a-11e8-b2b5-79270f9cce17_story.html

¹¹⁶ "Opinion | The Senate Should Not Confirm Kavanaugh. Signed, 2,400+ Law Professors," *The New York Times*, October 3, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/10/03/opinion/kavanaugh-law-professors-letter.html>,

nor the character essential for a member of the highest court in our nation”.¹¹⁷ A *Washington Post* editorial came out opposing Kavanaugh's confirmation, citing his “hyperpartisan rhetoric” that “poisoned any sense that he could serve as an impartial judge”.¹¹⁸ Notably, a group of Kavanaugh's “drinking buddies” at Yale published an opinion piece opposing his confirmation, asserting he was dishonest in his sworn testimony but without commenting on any of the sexual abuse accusations against him.¹¹⁹ Although these groups openly expressed their opposition to Kavanaugh’s nomination, they still made relatively little remarks condemning his character based on the accusations of sexual assault.

The most important analysis of the political value of women’s rage comes not from the examination of the Kavanaugh hearings themselves, but from the women who actively protested them. Demonstrators were a constant presence, frequently disrupting the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings for President Trump's nomination of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court. Their efforts included protesting in hearing rooms, participating in nightly vigils on Capitol Hill, writing letters to senators, setting up meetings between lawmakers and constituents, and spreading public awareness. These women were justifiably angry, and used their anger in an attempt to reject the nomination

¹¹⁷ Steven Martin, “NCC Calls for Withdrawal of Kavanaugh Nomination,” National Council of Churches, April 13, 2018, <http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/ncc-calls-for-withdrawal-of-kavanaugh-nomination/>

¹¹⁸ Justin Wise, “Washington Post Editorial Board Calls for ‘no’ Vote on Supreme Court Nominee for First Time in over 30 Years,” The Hill, October 5, 2018, <https://thehill.com/homenews/media/410025-washington-post-editorial-board-calls-for-no-vote-on-supreme-court-nominee-for>

¹¹⁹ “We Were Brett Kavanaugh’s Drinking Buddies. We Don’t Think He Should Be Confirmed,” *The Washington Post*, October 5, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-were-brett-kavanaughs-drinking-buddies-we-dont-think-he-should-be-confirmed/2018/10/04/923cf6ac-c821-11e8-b2b5-79270f9cce17_story.html

and prove that sexual violence should not and can not be tolerated in the eyes of the United States government. The Kavanaugh protesters used their anger to fuel their activism, but it was not met without criticism. Because of the way in which society genders anger, these protesters were largely silenced, their anger misconstrued, and their activism left meaningless, at least toward changing the outcome of Kavanaugh's confirmation to the Court.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The way in which the Kavanaugh hearing protesters were received illustrates how women's anger goes unvalued. Media discussion of the protesters' anger was distorted and misrepresentative, resulting in the complete dismissal of their activism. An estimated 1,200-plus protesters poured into Senate office buildings on Capitol Hill in support of Ford,¹²⁰ and it was reported by the Capitol Police that at least 227 protesters were arrested over the course of the hearings.¹²¹ The level of opposition on display emphasized the anger among progressive activists over a nominee, accused of sexual assault, who would cement the Supreme Court's conservative majority for years to come.

Protesters displayed their activism through their clothing, banners and chants. Some protesters wore shirts that read things like "I Am What's at Stake" and "Reproductive Freedom For All". Others arrived on Capitol Hill dressed as characters from *The Handmaid's Tale*, the story of a dystopian future in which women are treated as the sexual property of the state.¹²² One protester who donned her Handmaiden costume to protest Kavanaugh's nomination explained that their group was organized by Demand Justice, a liberal advocacy group. She said that "Brett Kavanaugh has a worrying track record for the health care for women, especially women of color and poor women, it's not

¹²⁰ Barrett, Foran, and Wilson, "Republican Senators Say Brett Kavanaugh Committee Vote to Go on as Scheduled Friday."

¹²¹ Stableford, "Kavanaugh Hearing Starts with a Bang as Protesters, Dems Interrupt Opening Statements."

¹²² Jason Breslow, "The Resistance At The Kavanaugh Hearings," NPR, September 8, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/09/08/645497667/the-resistance-at-the-kavanaugh-hearings-more-than-200-arrests>

just that, he represents a rising in fascism in America that we're worried about, especially that's been spear-headed by Donald Trump".¹²³ One protester yelled, "Save Roe, vote no" during an exchange about whether Kavanaugh had been asked about his views on *Roe v. Wade*.¹²⁴ Many other protesters have expressed concerns over Kavanaugh's position on *Roe v. Wade* and women's reproductive rights.

"This is a mockery and a travesty of justice," yelled one protester during the hearings. "Kavanaugh can't be trusted," shouted another. Hundreds of activists raised fists and shouted "Lock Him Up" in front of the Supreme Court and unfurled banners inside Senate office buildings. Angry protesters marched and shouted in, around, and throughout Capitol Hill. Arrests were made for blocking hallways or for unfurling banners reading "Withdraw Kavanaugh. No Abusers on the Supreme Court".¹²⁵

In one confrontation, activists Maria Gallagher and Ana Maria Archila, blocked an elevator door that Senator Jeff Flake was trying to close. Archila told Flake, "what you are doing is allowing someone who actually violated a woman to sit in the Supreme Court".¹²⁶ "This is intolerable" said Gallagher to the senator, also adding "you have power but so many women are powerless".¹²⁷ More than a hundred protesters gathered in

¹²³ Elizabeth Landers, "Meet the Protesters Interrupting Kavanaugh's Hearing," CNN, September 5, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/09/05/politics/kavanaugh-hearing-protests/index.html>

¹²⁴ Landers, "Meet the Protesters Interrupting Kavanaugh's Hearing."

¹²⁵ Landers, "Meet the Protesters Interrupting Kavanaugh's Hearing."

¹²⁶ Doug Stanglin and Caroline Simon, "'Rise up, Women!'," *USA Today*, September 28, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/09/28/brett-kavanaugh-hearing-protesters-christine-blasey-ford/1453524002/>

¹²⁷ Stanglin and Simon, "'Rise up, Women!'"

front of the Supreme Court to hear speeches from fellow activists and Democratic lawmakers. The crowd chanted “Hey Hey, Ho Ho, Kavanaugh has got to go,” and “the people, united, will never be divided”.¹²⁸ Protesters were seen constantly interrupting hearing proceedings by shouting slogans like “you’re making a mockery of democracy!” or “senators: Do your jobs and stop this hearing!”.¹²⁹

Linda Sarsour, a co-chair of the Women's March and an organizer of many of the protests, stated that “disrupting the hearings was a way for us to go directly into the homes of the American people to say that we will not be silenced and you need to be as outraged as we are”.¹³⁰ Dana Singiser, vice president for public policy and government affairs at Planned Parenthood, explained that the efforts of the activists included more than just disrupting the hearings or being loud and angry. Protesters were not misbehaving in the way that the media portrayed them to be. Along with disrupting the hearings, they also engaged in nightly vigils on Capitol Hill, wrote letters to senators, set up meetings between lawmakers and constituents, organized, and resisted.¹³¹ Their anger was more than just a display, these protesters were trying to create meaningful change, yet were met with hostility and censure.

Dana Singiser mentioned again that Planned Parenthood is focused on activism such as phone calls and letter writing, especially to potential swing votes, like Republican

¹²⁸ Stanglin and Simon, ““Rise up, Women!””

¹²⁹ Ashraf Khalil, “Shout, Arrest, Repeat,” AP News, September 5, 2018, <https://apnews.com/98857708aff04091bb2f414dfdfef0d8>

¹³⁰ Breslow, “The Resistance At The Kavanaugh Hearings.”

¹³¹ Breslow, “The Resistance At The Kavanaugh Hearings.”

Senators Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski.¹³² Winnie Wong, senior adviser to the Women's March, disclosed some of the strategy for the protests and activism at the Kavanaugh hearings. She said “this is well-organized and scripted. This isn't chaos, it's exercising your constitutional rights”.¹³³ Wong estimated that the group had been organizing around the Supreme Court hearings for about a month. “We were ready to go and hit the ground running to make sure that everyone understood what was at stake with this particular seat being the deciding seat for us, for so many things that people care about from Roe v. Wade, to environmental issues, to campaign finance across the board,” she said in an interview outside the hearing room.¹³⁴

Wong and many other organizers were arrested during their demonstrations. She recounted that she yelled “for any senator who votes yes on the confirmation of Judge Kavanaugh there will be a political price to pay. That to me is an explicit demand and a promise”.¹³⁵ Wong added that the Women's March had 300 people committed to action during the hearings. The Women's March group spread their message to their 1.5 million member email list, drawing a variety of women from around the country who Wong says have traveled to participate. Wong described activists as “young professionals” with careers ranging from teachers and nurses to real estate agents. The Women's March organization also took on the responsibility of financially backing its members for travel,

¹³² Landers, “Meet the Protesters Interrupting Kavanaugh’s Hearing.”

¹³³ Landers, “Meet the Protesters Interrupting Kavanaugh’s Hearing.”

¹³⁴ Landers, “Meet the Protesters Interrupting Kavanaugh’s Hearing.”

¹³⁵ Landers, “Meet the Protesters Interrupting Kavanaugh’s Hearing.”

accommodations, legal training, and bail. Many of the arrests resulted in a \$35 to \$50 bail, which the group paid for. Wong commented several times on the “professional” nature of their Women's March protesters. The group has given members who go into the committee hearing room to protest “a script where we suggest certain messaging that may resonate more”.¹³⁶ Here, it becomes clear that these women’s protest efforts were representative, carefully planned, and justified. Anger solidified the community of women protesting the Kavanaugh nomination.

Despite the protesters’ clear and rational efforts, they were met with harmful language and disapproving attitudes from the media and other outlets. Senator Orrin Hatch said, “these people are so out of line they shouldn't even be allowed in the room”.¹³⁷ His statements were echoed by President Trump who expressed “why don't they take care of a situation like that” and “I think it's embarrassing for the country to allow protests, you don't even know which side the protestors were on”.¹³⁸ One news article called the activism exhibited in the chamber a “coordinated dance”, and labeled the protesters as “performers”.¹³⁹ This kind of belittling language dismisses women’s activism, tells the world that women’s anger is unimportant, and upholds rape culture in the form of supporting Kavanaugh and disbelieving women who come forward.

¹³⁶ Landers, “Meet the Protesters Interrupting Kavanaugh’s Hearing.”

¹³⁷ Breslow, “The Resistance At The Kavanaugh Hearings.”

¹³⁸ Breslow, “The Resistance At The Kavanaugh Hearings.”

¹³⁹ Khalil, “Shout, Arrest, Repeat.”

Another account of the protesters asserted that the interruptions disturbed the process of the hearings, with Kavanaugh, Senator Grassley, and others constantly making remarks about the disruptions, and Grassley placing blame on the Democrat senators.¹⁴⁰ One report claimed that the protesters were “annoying”, causing Senator Orrin Hatch to state “I think we should have this loudmouth removed. We shouldn’t have to put up with this kind of stuff,”¹⁴¹ after being interrupted by a woman in the crowd. President Donald Trump also weighed in on the interruptions. Trump called the protests “embarrassing for the country” and wondered why the disruptions were allowed to continue.¹⁴² He said “In the old days, we used to throw them out. Today, I guess they just keep screaming”.¹⁴³ Mirroring this kind of misogynistic language, Senator Ben Sasse described the protests as “hysteria”.¹⁴⁴ Sexist and degrading language used by news coverage of the hearings as well as directly from government officials illustrates just how unaccepted women’s anger is. These remarks serve to further remove protesters from their expressions of anger and from activism entirely, all while insulting and discriminating against them based on their gender.

Even amidst criticism, the protesters continued with their activism despite how it was received. Rachel O’Leary Carmona, chief operating officer of the Women’s March

¹⁴⁰ Alex Pappas and Gregg Re, “Second Day of Kavanaugh Hearings Erupts into Tense Cross-Examination on Mueller, Racial Profiling,” Fox News, July 1, 2018, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/second-day-of-kavanaugh-hearings-erupts-into-tense-cross-examination-on-mueller-racial-profiling>

¹⁴¹ Khalil, “Shout, Arrest, Repeat.”

¹⁴² Breslow, “The Resistance At The Kavanaugh Hearings.”

¹⁴³ Khalil, “Shout, Arrest, Repeat.”

¹⁴⁴ Breslow, “The Resistance At The Kavanaugh Hearings.”

organization, highlighted the importance of women's anger in saying that "women are disrupting this hearing today because our lives are at risk, women will die if Kavanaugh is confirmed".¹⁴⁵ Many protesters knew Kavanaugh was likely to be appointed despite their efforts, but still thought it was necessary to stand up for women and have their voices be heard. Linda Sarsour again explained the necessity of women's activism in saying "the women who have been arrested over the last few days helped generate political will for Senate Democrats to show some moral courage".¹⁴⁶ She cited the move by Senator Cory Booker to release a memo drafted by Kavanaugh on racial profiling that was labeled "Committee Confidential," meaning senators could review it but not make it public. "We believe the movement helped encourage that,"¹⁴⁷ she said. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse reiterated the importance of the protesters in stating "I think that the average independent voter, the labor family that voted for Trump last time but is now reconsidering, people like that don't think that screaming in a hearing room is a particularly effective strategy or a signal of a party that they much want to belong to".¹⁴⁸ Protesters were overall unsuccessful in stopping Kavanaugh's appointment, but through their anger and activism they were able to create new discourse that will impact the public view on Kavanaugh, sexual violence, and the judiciary system as a whole.

¹⁴⁵ Katherine Tully-McManus, "Protesters Rile Kavanaugh Hearing," Roll Call, September 4, 2018, <https://www.rollcall.com/2018/09/04/protesters-rile-kavanaugh-hearing/>

¹⁴⁶ Breslow, "The Resistance At The Kavanaugh Hearings."

¹⁴⁷ Breslow, "The Resistance At The Kavanaugh Hearings."

¹⁴⁸ Breslow, "The Resistance At The Kavanaugh Hearings."

The analysis of the Kavanaugh hearings and its protesters ultimately determines that the political value of feminine rage is underestimated. Although activists were unable to stop Kavanaugh's appointment, women, anger, and protest played a huge role in the way that the Kavanaugh hearings were received. Protesters gave newfound voice and representation to women across the country. Angry women have historically been silenced, but through this case study, it becomes clear just how powerful women's anger can be. Eventually, angry women will maintain the acceptance, support, and trust needed for successful activism.

Women have been removed from the public sphere, from expressions of anger, and from activism altogether. Gendered anger undoubtedly has political consequences. Within an examination of the Kavanaugh hearing and its protesters, it becomes clear that feminine rage is powerful, although undervalued. Feminine rage has, and will continue to have political value. As anger becomes more and more de-gendered, women's activism will become more capable. Anger will remain a site of struggle, but ultimately a powerful tool for female activists.

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