

GEORGE F. WILL

June 13, 2014

Dear Senators Blumenthal, Feinstein, Baldwin and Casey:

I have received your letter of June 12, and I am puzzled.

You say my statistics “fly in the face of everything we know about this issue.” You do not mention which statistics, but those I used come from the Obama administration, and from simple arithmetic involving publicly available reports on campus sexual assaults.

The administration asserts that only 12 percent of college sexual assaults are reported. Note well: I did not question this statistic. Rather, I used it.

I cited one of the calculations based on it that Mark Perry of the American Enterprise Institute has performed. So, I think your complaint is with the conclusion that arithmetic dictates, based on the administration’s statistic. The inescapable conclusion is that another administration statistic -- that one in five women is sexually assaulted while in college -- is insupportable and might call for tempering your rhetoric about “the scourge of sexual assault.”

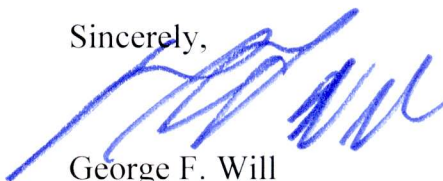
As for what you call my “ancient beliefs,” which you think derive from an “antiquated” and “counterintuitive” culture, allow me to tell you something really counterintuitive: I think I take sexual assault much more seriously than you do. Which is why I worry about definitions of that category of crime that might, by their breadth, tend to trivialize it. And why I think sexual assault is a felony that should be dealt with by the criminal justice system, and not be adjudicated by improvised campus processes.

Over many centuries, we have refined our commitment to due process; we should not casually depart from what we have developed.

And speaking of the counterintuitive, consider assumptions about how to assign responsibility regarding sexual intimacies: Do the four of you, or do I, have more confidence in what feminism once valuably asserted -- the fact that women are the equals of men in possession of moral agency?

It took many centuries for this, too, to become broadly and firmly accepted in law and culture. All of us concerned about justice, and about the culture of mutual respect between young men and women, should think long and hard about how their behaviors are judged and responsibilities assigned.

Sincerely,



George F. Will