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## Sexual Assault at God's Harvard

Patrick Henry College was supposed to be a safe place. For these young women, it wasn't.

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Photo: Illustration by Gel Jamlang

**T**he security guards were bored. It was the first weekend of May 2010—a time when students at other universities were partying before finals. This, however, was Patrick Henry College (PHC), the elite evangelical school better known as “God’s Harvard.” Here, in sleepy Purcellville, Virginia, instead of police officers or rent-a-cops, the security guards were all upperclassmen. On a good Friday or Saturday night, they’d catch freshmen trying to sneak back onto campus after an evening visiting the monuments in nearby Washington, D.C. Mostly, though, they just double-checked that all the doors were locked.

Patrick Henry College was founded in 2000, but you won’t find any bold, modern architecture on campus: Its buildings were designed in the federalist style to evoke an Ivy League school. Dress code is business casual during the week. Daily chapel is mandatory. Drinking, smoking, gambling, and dancing (outside of dance classes) aren’t allowed on campus—only wholesome, school-sanctioned hijinks, like the tradition of tossing newly engaged young men in the central

retention pond known as Lake Bob: a “Bobtism.” The security guards saw quite a few Bobtisms.

That May night, Adam Fisher and another guard watched the security monitors from their post. It was long past the 1 a.m. weekend curfew, a time when campus had the still and quiet feel of a small town hours after everyone has gone to bed. It seemed like any other night, but then Fisher’s colleague called out in excitement. He’d caught something on the monitors: the dim glow of brake lights, out there in the darkness. A car was pulling up to the campus entrance.

Fisher and his partner headed out past the dorms, to the fields near the entry. By the time they arrived, the car was gone, and Claire Spear was lying in a field. There was grass in her long, red hair, and she was crying.

Fisher could tell something was very wrong. “Claire, we need to go find your R.A.,” Adam said. “I’m going to take you. Is that OK with you?” She couldn’t answer. She was panicking and having trouble breathing.

Adam picked Claire up and carried her back across campus to the dorms. She was limp in his arms, and her eyes were closed. Claire struggled to explain what had happened.

“She kept saying that she had been violated,” Adam remembers.

**W**hen Claire Spear arrived at Patrick Henry as a freshman in 2009, she, like all new PHC students, affirmed a statement of faith saying the devil is real, the Bible is without error, and “Jesus Christ literally will come to earth again in the Second Advent.” It was a great comfort to both Claire and her parents knowing PHC was a bubble unto its own: On campus, only good, moral Christians would be found—their kind of people, people they could trust.

“I figured nothing bad could happen to me,” Claire says.

With just more than 320 current students and 590 graduates to date, Patrick Henry is a tiny school with an outsized influence as a training ground for the religious right and a pipeline to conservative jobs in Washington. The Bush-era White House had about as many interns from PHC as Georgetown, the journalist Hanna Rosin wrote in her 2007 book, *God’s Harvard* - <http://www.amazon.com/Gods-Harvard-Christian-College-Mission/dp/0151012628> - . Students in the school’s Strategic Intelligence Program can graduate with security clearances from their summer internships, making PHC a feeder school for the CIA, the FBI, the National Security Agency, various branches of the military, and intelligence contractors. Many students go there with dreams of becoming a senator or the Supreme Court justice who helps overturn *Roe v.*

*Wade*. A prospective student pamphlet quotes George W. Bush, saying, “The College holds a vision for the future of America.”

The founder of Patrick Henry College, [Michael Farris](http://www.hsllda.org/about/staff/attorneys/Farris.asp) - <http://www.hsllda.org/about/staff/attorneys/Farris.asp> - , came to prominence in the early '80s as the head of the Washington state branch of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority. In those days, home-schooling was illegal in most states. But within some conservative evangelical circles, the practice took off. Under their own roofs, the thinking went, parents wouldn't have to worry about their children being inundated with evolutionary theories or arguments in favor of abortion. Farris, an attorney, formed the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) to wage state-by-state court battles for the right to opt out of public education and abolish child-protection laws that the homeschooling movement viewed as state intrusion and a threat to certain tough-love forms of discipline. (Farris did not respond to an interview request.)



*Mike Cardew/KRT/Newscom*

Patrick Henry College was built in 2000 but was designed in the federal style to evoke an Ivy League campus.

Underlying homeschooling culture is the Christian patriarchy movement, which teaches that men and women have separate, “complementarian” roles: A woman's highest calling is as a mother and submissive “helpmeet” to her husband, who in turn functions as God's representative on Earth. “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church,” reads Ephesians 5:22, an oft-cited biblical passage in the movement that is also invoked in the PHC [student handbook](http://www.phc.edu/UserFiles/File/_Academics-SL/Student%20Life/2011Sp%20-%20Student%20Handbook%20-%20FINAL%20-%2004112011.pdf) - [http://www.phc.edu/UserFiles/File/\\_Academics-SL/Student%20Life/2011Sp%20-%20Student%20Handbook%20-%20FINAL%20-%2004112011.pdf](http://www.phc.edu/UserFiles/File/_Academics-SL/Student%20Life/2011Sp%20-%20Student%20Handbook%20-%20FINAL%20-%2004112011.pdf) - . The most conservative patriarchy devotees—like Farris, a father of ten—call themselves “Quiverfull” and believe in having as many children as God gives them.

Farris has said a main drive behind the founding of PHC was the demand from homeschooling parents for a college that promoted courtship culture, in which male students ask female students' fathers for permission to “court” with marriage in mind. About 85 percent of PHC students have been homeschooled, and all students pledge to “reserve sexual activity for marriage, shun sexually explicit material, and seek parental counsel when pursuing a romantic relationship,” according to the PHC student handbook.

For many homeschoolers, PHC offers the first opportunity to have classmates of the opposite sex who aren't their siblings. If a boy and a girl start becoming friends, before long, they'll sit down and have a "DTR" — Define The Relationship—to see if they have feelings for one another and should start involving their parents.

While parents can't be there to directly supervise budding romances, the Patrick Henry administration can be trusted as a surrogate. If, for example, a couple is seen doing much of anything beyond a quick kiss, R.A.s might e-mail or talk to them individually. Like it or not, the rules are in place for the students' own good. A passage in the Student Honor Code reads: "I pledge, by the grace of God, to submit to proper authorities."

The self-policing that courtship culture requires, however, is not egalitarian. Responsibility falls disproportionately to women, who are taught to protect their "purity" and to never "tempt" their brothers in Christ to "stumble" with immodest behavior. "The lack of men's responsibility or culpability for their own actions and the acceptance of male 'urges' as irresistible forces of nature is the understructure of Christian modesty movements and their secular counterpart," the journalist Kathryn Joyce wrote in *Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement* - <http://www.amazon.com/Quiverfull-Inside-Christian-Patriarchy-Movement/dp/0807010731> - . These movements, she noted, see "women's bodies as almost supernaturally perverse and corrupting."

At Patrick Henry, one alumna remembers a chapel lecture that compared women who have had sexual contact before marriage to used cars. "You want to be a Porsche," was the message, she says, adding in an e-mail, "They basically at no point accounted for sexual assault/rape etc (cases where girls' 'purity' was taken from them) and left many girls who'd been victims in the past feeling ashamed." According to a current PHC junior, the school puts the "burden" on female students to ward off the male gaze—be it from students or professors. She remembers being called in to talk to the residential director, who told her that a male professor had informed the Office of Student Life that her shirts were too revealing when she bent over.

In 2012, Representative Todd Akin, running for Senate in Missouri, sparked a national outrage by speaking of what he called "[legitimate rape](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/21/us/politics/rep-todd-akin-legitimate-rape-statement-and-reaction.html?_r=0) - [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/21/us/politics/rep-todd-akin-legitimate-rape-statement-and-reaction.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/21/us/politics/rep-todd-akin-legitimate-rape-statement-and-reaction.html?_r=0) - " — a category, he implied, that did not actually apply to many rape cases. Patrick Henry College has sponsored similar ideas on sexual assault. Last September, the school chose Dr. Stephen Baskerville, a professor of government, to deliver a speech that the entire student body was required to attend. He argued that feminism and liberalism have transformed the government into "a matriarchal leviathan." The result, he said, according to a [copy of the speech](http://www.scribd.com/doc/168175446/Stephen-Baskerville-Politicizing-Potiphar-s-Wife) - <http://www.scribd.com/doc/168175446/Stephen-Baskerville-Politicizing-Potiphar-s-Wife> - , was a society plagued by politically motivated "witch hunts" against men—while "the seductress who lures men into a 'honeytrap' " was really

to blame. “Recreational sex in the evening turns into accusations of ‘rape’ in the morning, even when it was entirely consensual,” Baskerville explained. “This is especially rampant on college campuses.” (In a statement, PHC said Baskerville’s speech was “an exercise in academic freedom” and not “endorsed by the administration.”)

“When you have a culture of license where you can’t tell the difference between what’s full rape or fake rape and what’s real rape,” PHC journalism professor Les Sillars added during the post-speech Q&A, “it makes dealing with real rape really, really hard.”

Researchers estimate that one in five American women is sexually assaulted in college, and Patrick Henry College’s unique campus culture has not insulated the school from sexual violence. In fact, it puts female students, like Claire Spear, in a particular bind: How do you report sexual assault at a place where authorities seem skeptical that such a thing even exists?

Claire was homeschooled in Durham, North Carolina. Her family was traditional: Sex was for marriage, alcohol almost nonexistent, and her parents expected she would live the ideal Christian life, focused on a husband and children. Claire did not want to be a stay-at-home mom, however. She wanted to travel the world, to be a diplomat or an ambassador one day.

When it came time for Claire to pick a college, Patrick Henry was the logical choice. Graduates went on to work important jobs in Washington, and Claire’s parents wouldn’t have to worry too much about her. “While the world outside our homes often appears to be spinning out of control,” the HSLDA wrote one year in a fund-raising appeal, PHC was “a safe place.”

Almost immediately, it seemed to Claire, other freshmen girls started asking her if she had found Mr. Right or hoped to find Mr. Right or what qualities she sought in a potential Mr. Right. So many of her peers, it seemed, saw college as a means to getting their “MRS Degree.” Here was the central tension female students had to navigate at PHC: On the one hand, they were expected to have careers and “shape our culture with timeless biblical values and fidelity to the



*Jocelyn Augustino/Redux*

Michael Farris founded Patrick Henry College, in part to promote “court culture.”



spirit of the American founding” — the school’s mission. But at the same time, women were supposed to treat their professional aspirations as secondary to the ultimate purpose of starting a family. “Even the most ambitious [women],” Rosin wrote in *God’s Harvard*, “told me without reservation that as soon as they had children they would quit their jobs to raise them.”

Claire could tell her classmates didn’t really know what to make of her. Raised in a charismatic church, she was open and emotive, often sneaking off by herself to dance in the fields on the edge of campus. She would skip around the school grounds or wear daisy chains in her hair. If she felt like taking a rainbow collection of Sharpie pens and drawing a full arm sleeve tattoo, she went and did it. She didn’t fit the PHC female ideal: clean-cut, proper, and meek.

Students who go “against the grain of the school,” even if just by “dressing differently or being a little bit louder,” says a current PHC student, “definitely figured out that it wasn’t their place.” Rosin wrote that “Patrick Henry girls who are too loud, too eager for leadership roles, too political — no matter how appropriately they dress — are always kept at arm’s length. Boys refer to them as the ‘red leather stiletto girls’ or ‘political animals,’ and all but declare them unmarriageable.”

Often times, Claire felt judged. “They’d call me a ‘free spirit’ with a weird look on their face, like they weren’t sure it was a good spirit,” she says. The more her brothers and sisters in Christ disapproved of her, it seemed, the more fake-nice they acted. Campus felt increasingly constricting, like a “prison,” she says. By the end of the semester, Claire began thinking about leaving PHC. Spring semester only got worse. She became bulimic yet tried to keep acting like her normal, outgoing, happy-go-lucky self in public.

Claire befriended a group of juniors who sometimes broke school rules by drinking. The group included a student named John (whose name has been changed), who had recently become engaged to his girlfriend back home. Claire and John would hang out together sitting in John’s car, listening to music and smoking cloves. Claire considered John one of her close guy friends.

One winter night in 2010, John and Claire were together in his car in Purcellville. John claims that nothing inappropriate happened, but Claire says that, without warning, he climbed over the console between the driver’s seat and the passenger’s seat, mounted her, and began grinding against her. She froze, unable to speak. Afterward, Claire agonized over why she hadn’t “fought him” off. “I was afraid that it had something to do with my sinful nature,” she says. In the Christian world Claire had been brought up in, men only do bad things to impure women who have tempted them. She blamed herself, tried to act normal, and told no one.

The first weekend in May, Claire and the group of juniors headed for a small lake near PHC’s campus. John bought the alcohol. Claire got tipsy, and John offered to give her a ride back to

campus. “If I had been sober, I would have had the intuitive sense to keep from putting myself back in a car alone with him,” Claire says. “But I wasn’t, so I didn’t.” Before they got back to campus, Claire remembers John stopping the car and climbing on top of her again. Once more, he began dry-humping her. He didn’t remove her clothes, but Claire felt terrified and trapped with John weighing her down. Things didn’t compute. John was her friend; he was engaged; he was a Christian, just like her. In her confusion, she managed to tell him to stop.

John says he dropped Claire off outside her dorm without incident: “I in no way assaulted Claire,” he says. But Claire says he parked near a campus entrance, and, distraught, she panicked and fled the car. She eventually wandered into the fields out past the dorms, where Adam Fisher found her.

John returned to his dorm. “If anybody asks,” John told a friend, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, “we were in here all night playing video games.”

Fisher called his security sergeant to report that he’d found Claire outside of the dorms after curfew and that she said she had been violated. From there, protocol held that the sergeant would inform the administration about the incident.

A few days later, Claire was summoned to the Office of Student Life, which handles everything from “lesser violations,” like curfew and dress code, to “more serious violations,” like alcohol, tobacco, pornography, and sexual harassment and assault. She walked to the second floor of the Barbara Hodel Student Life Center and took a seat in the office of a familiar face—Sandra Corbitt, the dean of student life and the school’s primary disciplinarian.

Corbitt was known for her polite, determined cheerfulness and ever-present smile. When students got called into her office, she was not stern or angry. She seemed like she cared about each student individually and the college as a whole. “My job is just to help you all be who you say you want to be by coming here,” Corbitt once said.

Corbitt looks every bit the college administrator. She wears pearls and blazers with turtlenecks. Her shoulder-length hair is styled in a soft curl. In a culture that sees motherhood as a woman’s highest calling, she is an unmarried woman who has had an impressive career. Before coming to PHC in the fall of 2006 to be dean of women, Corbitt worked for three years at Christian Union, which develops Christian student leaders at Ivy League schools, in hopes of instilling a Christian worldview in government, media, business, and the other places elite graduates tend to land. Before that, she spent 19 years at the student ministry Campus Crusade for Christ.

Under Corbitt, PHC loosened some of the campus rules on kissing and “prolonged embracing.” But the administration’s word was still final. “You came to a private school, so I can make you write with purple pens on Thursday if I want,” Corbitt once said in a meeting with a freshman

about her “troublesome” behavior: She and her roommate had pushed their beds together to save space. But Corbitt said it gave the appearance of “struggling with issues.” The freshman said she grew up sharing a bed with siblings, yet Corbitt wouldn’t budge. “Since it is my school, my dorms, I can say, I don’t want the beds together,” Corbitt explained. “Now you’re on my radar screen.”

“Don’t always be going up against the grain,” Corbitt continued, according to an audio recording of the meeting. “Because you know what? You’ll enjoy college somewhere else if that’s the case.”

When Claire told Dean Corbitt what had happened in John’s car that night, she says, “it felt like I was just talking to a brick wall.” The administration “basically told me that they couldn’t do anything because none of the details of my story could be proven.” It seemed to her that the school was far more concerned about her underage drinking than it was about an allegation of sexual assault. Corbitt forced Claire to call her mother to tell her she was in trouble for alcohol—and told Claire to be careful because she had put herself on the dean’s “radar.” Claire says PHC administrators never mentioned the possibility of involving the police. The administration was supposed to be a second parent, Claire says, but “they didn’t take me seriously.”

“The school talked to me. They talked to Claire,” John says, “and they cleared me of everything.” (Claire authorized PHC to release the records from her case, but the school chose not to. “We view these experiences as worthy of privacy, even if at this particular juncture in their lives they may have a different view,” PHC wrote in a statement.) John admits he concocted a video-game alibi, but says it was because he didn’t want to get in trouble for breaking the school’s strict alcohol rules. Adam Fisher, the security guard, says the deans didn’t call him in for questioning.

Claire dropped out of Patrick Henry at the end of her freshman year. John, meanwhile, was suspended for a semester for drinking and for what he says the administration called “gross negligence for the concern of another” in not making sure Claire got back safely into her dorm. Ultimately he was appreciative of his suspension, John says, as it forced him to reckon with his “irresponsibility” with alcohol. During his time away, several PHC administrators were “deeply concerned with not just my mental state but also my spiritual state,” John says.

“I was grateful to the administration whenever they came to me and said that no one was pressing any charges,” says John. “No one was going to press the matter any further after their assessment of the whole situation. That’s what it all came down to.”

**C**laire was not the first female student to leave PHC disillusioned with the administration she had trusted to protect her. Other female students who say they reported sexual assault or harassment to the administration also left feeling that



school officials blamed them instead of holding the accused male students accountable. The administration, they say, seemed much more concerned with protecting Patrick Henry's pristine public image.

"Basically, my issue was swept under the rug, and the assaulter received little else but a reprimand," says a young woman who attended Patrick Henry between 2004 and 2008. The student fell asleep at an off-campus party where there had been drinking and was awoken by a male PHC student assaulting her. She says she reported the incident to Patrick Henry. "The administration encouraged me to not go to the police and said that, because alcohol was involved and I was violating the rules there, they hinted that I could be expelled if I brought light to the incident," the student says. "The focus was the alcohol. I drank. I sinned. I deserved to be assaulted in the middle of the night."

Another student, who asked to remain anonymous, says she was raped the summer before her freshman year. When she arrived at PHC in the fall of 2007, she was deeply depressed and cutting herself. She was summoned to Corbitt's office. "I remember her smiling a lot in a forced, insincere way while she was telling me that 'someone' had relayed to her my 'issues,' and the 'administration was concerned about my ability to successfully complete the semester,'" she wrote in an e-mail. The dean insisted that she take a psychological evaluation, then called her back to the Office of Student Life, got her parents on speakerphone, and made her tell them about the assault. When she choked up, the student says, Corbitt cut in to finish the job. Then the dean informed her parents that she was unfit for PHC and needed to be retrieved immediately. Her father flew out the following day and whisked her away, says the student.

In the spring of 2008, another young woman who spoke on the condition of anonymity says she made a sexual-harassment report to Corbitt. A male student was sending threatening messages, including an e-mail that conveyed that "he wanted to forcibly take my virginity," she says. When she met with Corbitt to show her the e-mail, the student remembers the dean saying, "The choices you make and the people you choose to associate with, the way you try to portray yourself, will affect how people treat you." In subsequent meetings, the student says Corbitt told her to think about her clothing and "the kinds of ideas it puts in men's minds."

The woman asked Corbitt to alert security and to keep an eye out for the student in question. Corbitt wouldn't even consider it, the student says. In the end, "nothing came of it. The school consistently prioritizes keeping its spot-free image (necessary to maintain its far-right, hyper evangelical donor base happy), over the well being of its students," she wrote in an e-mail.

PHC officials said they could not discuss the details of these incidents, but described them as "not accurate."

Patrick Henry College is not alone in internally adjudicating sexual assault. Every college and university maintains its own shadow legal system—and many secular colleges have a terrible track record of investigating and punishing sexual assault. But Patrick Henry College is one of only four private colleges in the United States that eschews federal funds in order to avoid complying with government regulations. This poses financial hardships for students and their families—PHC students are prohibited from accessing FAFSA loans, Pell Grants, state funds, scholarships, or the G.I. Bill—and it makes the institution particularly dependent on its conservative evangelical donor base. Homeschoolers see this as a worthwhile price to pay for freedom from government intrusion. The financial-aid page on PHC's website notes, "In order to safeguard our distinctly Christian worldview, we do not accept or participate in government funding."

This also means PHC isn't subject to the Clery Act, Title IX, or the more recent Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act. The Clery Act requires schools to issue campus crime reports. Title IX says schools must hold an investigation independent of a criminal investigation and ensure that victims can change dorms and class arrangements, get campus restraining orders, and receive help filing a police report if they choose to do so. The Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act mandates that schools have prompt disciplinary proceedings and inform victims of their rights and options under Title IX. These regulations are no guarantee that sexual-assault accusations will be handled properly, and students at dozens of schools have recently filed Title IX and Clery Act complaints with the Department of Education that document widespread victim-blaming, mishandling of reports, and impunity for perpetrators. Yet, PHC students lack even that legal recourse. (The school says it tries to "generally follow the principles of those laws," but it is not legally bound to comply with them.)



*The Washington Times/Zuma Press/Newscom*

Students from Patrick Henry's first graduating class, the class of 2002, they receive their diplomas.

"As a private campus, it's outside of federal influence. They can do whatever they want," says Brett Sokolow, an attorney and president of the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management. "If you're a female student, and you elect to enroll at a campus that does not

provide any of the federal protections that attach to other colleges and universities, you need to know that going in.”

In late November 2006, four years before Claire’s experience, another young woman reported a sexual assault to Sandra Corbitt, who was then the dean of women. Sarah Patten cried as she recounted how, the previous Saturday night, a boy named Ryan (whose name has been changed) had sexually assaulted her.

“I know him,” Sarah remembers Corbitt saying. “He’s a nice boy. Are you sure you want to report this?”

Sarah described what she could remember: coming in and out of consciousness, her limbs feeling heavy and paralyzed, Ryan on top of her, his hands groping her all over, waking up disoriented.

Sarah says Corbitt grilled her on certain details: What was she wearing? Had she flirted with him or given him mixed signals? “The entire line of questioning was basically like, ‘Did you make it up? Or did you deserve it in some way? Or was it consensual and now you’re just lying about it to make him look bad?’ ” recalls Rachel Leon, Sarah’s roommate who had accompanied her to Corbitt’s office for support.

Listening to Sarah from across her desk, the dean was as polite as ever. But she didn’t seem to believe Sarah’s story at all. “If you were telling the truth about this,” Sarah remembers Corbitt saying, “God would have kept you conscious to bear witness to the abuse against you.”

Sarah and Rachel then told Corbitt that Ryan had come by their dorm a few days after the incident and rapped on the windows, trying to get in. They talked about the barrage of e-mails, calls, and text messages Ryan had sent them, saying what he did was wrong and that he was sorry.

Corbitt told Sarah and Rachel to forward all of Ryan’s e-mails to her and delete them from their inboxes. The dean then asked them to pull out their phones and show her Ryan’s text messages. Corbitt said to delete those, too. The dean explained that they weren’t allowed to speak of this matter outside of her office. She also forbade Sarah from seeking outside counseling. Both Sarah and Rachel feared they would be expelled if they disobeyed.

A few days later, Sarah returned to the dean’s office to write up an official statement. Sarah still believed what her Christian homeschooling upbringing had instilled in her: that you shouldn’t question adults in positions of authority, because they’re looking out for you and probably know

best. So when Corbitt strongly encouraged Sarah not to go to the police—to trust Patrick Henry College to handle this situation—she did as she was told.

**T**he incident Sarah reported to Dean Corbitt took place at a friend's family home in Norfolk, Virginia, over Thanksgiving break. She was with a group of friends from Distance Learning, the online PHC program she had participated in as a senior in high school. Saturday night, they played games with their host parents, before buckling down to do homework.

The students had dumped their bags in the room where Ryan was staying. Sarah retrieved a book she needed for Western history class and plopped down on the floor, hoping to crank through as much as she could. The others eventually went to sleep, but Sarah remembers that she and Ryan stayed up working. He invited her to get more comfortable and join him on the bed, which she did. At some point, Sarah fell asleep while reading.

Sarah remembers waking up in Ryan's arms. "I think you should go back to your room now," Ryan told her, according to a copy of the statement Sarah says she wrote in Dean Corbitt's office. "My jeans were unsnapped and unzipped, and my shirt was pushed up," her statement continued. The clock read 5:30 a.m. She was disoriented, nauseous, and her head felt heavy. With her pants falling down, she made her way down the hall. In the bathroom, she threw up.

At first, Sarah didn't remember what had happened. But in the hours that followed, bits and pieces started coming back to her: not being able to breathe with Ryan on top of her. His face pushing up against her neck, her cheek, her hair. Her arms and legs feeling heavy and useless. The overpowering smell of Old Spice. His hands down inside her underwear, groping her butt. Somehow being able to summon the strength to push his hands away when he pushed them down the front of her pants. And somewhere in the haze, her prayer: "Please, God, make it stop."

Sunday night, back on PHC's campus, Ryan asked Sarah to meet with him. "I wanted to apologize for taking liberties," he told Sarah, according to her statement. He asked her to keep this between the two of them. Feeling dirty and ashamed, blaming herself—"What was I doing in his room, anyway?" she thought—Sarah agreed. (Ryan did not respond to multiple interview requests.)

But the next day, Sarah told her roommate Rachel. Rachel, in turn, angrily confronted Ryan by e-mail, who then began contacting Sarah, Rachel, and their third roommate (who asked to remain anonymous) to say he was sorry.

Sarah was having nightmares and screaming in her sleep. After her first meeting with Dean Corbitt, Sarah returned to her office alone to write up her official statement, dated December 1, 2006. As part of the investigation, Corbitt summoned Sarah for several rounds of questioning. "It's my job to poke holes in your story," Sarah remembers Dean Corbitt saying. "I have to make sure that you're not lying to me. ... I don't think you're wholly innocent in this situation."

Corbitt recommended keeping the sexual-assault proceedings informal due to the "strange nature" of her testimony, according to Sarah. She says that Corbitt never mentioned the option of a hearing before a faculty committee, as provided for in the student handbook.

When they talked about going to the police, Sarah remembers that Corbitt asked her, "Well, what evidence do you have?" and discouraged police involvement, arguing that PHC could seek God's truth and justice, but outside authorities don't share that worldview. *Don't you trust God?* was the implication, Sarah says.

**M**eanwhile, the administration questioned Ryan separately. "Ryan was very angry about being accused," remembers Sarah's second roommate. Sarah feared that Ryan would try to get back at her for reporting him. On such a small campus, he was impossible to avoid. They had classes together. When they passed one another on the sidewalk, it always seemed like he made sure to walk a little too close to Sarah, and the smell of Old Spice would bring everything back.

"I hate walking alone," Sarah wrote in a diary entry that December. "He is a vindictive person with violent tendencies. ... He scares me. I'm constantly afraid."

Dean Thornhill, the dean of men, had the task of questioning Ryan and taking his statement. Corbitt informed Sarah that she and Thornhill agreed that "Ryan has the right to face his accuser." (Sokolow, the attorney, said giving the accused this opportunity was "unorthodox and outside the best practices of the field.") The deans brought Sarah and Ryan into a room together and gave him a copy of her handwritten statement, which included a bulleted list of memories: "Ryan laying on top of me"; "he pushed up my shirt and ran his hands all over my back and stomach"; "him grabbing my butt, not thru my jeans or underwear but actually my butt. I remember pushing his hand away."

The deans asked Ryan to go through the statement and mark any inaccuracies. He gave it back to them untouched, Sarah says. Ryan told the deans that he "crossed a line" and realized he'd "taken liberties." According to Sarah, he confirmed everything she said except one key detail: He said he didn't realize that it wasn't consensual.

The deans went off to deliberate. Corbitt determined that Sarah had made an “error in judgment” by being alone in a boy’s room in violation of PHC rules. “You are in part responsible for what happened, because you put yourself in a compromising situation,” Corbitt said, according to Sarah. “Actions have consequences.”

Both she and Ryan were to receive “growth contracts,” Sarah says. This meant counseling sessions—Ryan with Dr. Steve Hake, a literature professor, and Sarah with Corbitt. With that, the investigation was over. “Ryan acted as though not being expelled were synonymous with exoneration,” says Sarah’s roommate. “He positively gloated.”

Sarah’s weekly counseling sessions began after winter break. Corbitt opened the first session in January 2007 by saying Sarah would have to bear with her, because she’d never handled anything like this before. For each session, Dean Corbitt had Sarah read a chapter from *Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman’s Soul* - <http://www.amazon.com/Captivating-Revised-Updated-Unveiling-Mystery/dp/1400200385> - , a popular evangelical self-help book about proper femininity and modesty. In one chapter, co-author Stasi Eldredge tells a cautionary tale of studying abroad in college, saying she was a “rebellious, unwise woman” who “put myself in a dangerous position”:

After enjoying a few too many drinks at a local bar, my girlfriend and I accepted a ride back to the hotel from the men we had been drinking with. You must be shaking your head as you read this, knowing what was coming. I am. Their offered ride did not lead us back to the hotel, but instead to a private location where I was raped.

Sarah, like most any sexual-assault survivor, was struggling not to blame herself. But Corbitt’s focus, she says, was on making her “pure” again. Corbitt set out to teach her about appropriate behavior and the kinds of clothing that are tempting to boys, like short skirts and low-cut shirts. That semester, Sarah began to fail classes. When nightmares woke her up, Sarah would pad downstairs to a friend’s room and curl up in bed with her. Other students weren’t so understanding. Hearing what had happened with Ryan, classmates repeatedly asked, “What were you wearing?” or “Why were you in his room?” or “Were you giving him mixed signals?” In May 2007, at the end of her freshman year, Sarah dropped out.

Shortly before the end of the school year, Sarah says she made an appointment to talk with PHC Provost Gene Veith to complain about Corbitt’s handling of her case. Sarah was accompanied by her friend and future husband, Josh (who asked to be identified by his first name only). The provost said he was unaware of the sexual-assault accusation, according to Sarah and Josh. Veith



was polite but dismissive. “It didn’t seem like he was taking it very seriously,” says Josh, who graduated from PHC in 2010. Josh told Veith he wanted to research sexual-assault policies at other schools, so PHC could reconsider its own. He remembers that Veith seemed open to the idea at the time. Later, Josh followed up by e-mail. “I never heard back,” he says.

Officials from Patrick Henry College declined interview requests. Citing student privacy, the college would not comment on many of the particulars of Sarah Patten’s (who asked to be identified by her maiden name) or Claire Spear’s accounts, or the incidents involving the other students who asked not to be named. “Our policy is to immediately report to law enforcement any potential criminal conduct on our campus of which we have actual knowledge, and to encourage any apparent victim to file a complaint with law enforcement,” PHC wrote in a statement. “Our investigation of these incidents did not reveal information that gave PHC reason to believe that a criminal offense had occurred.”

In response to a seven-page list of questions, PHC sent *The New Republic* a [five-page statement](http://www.newrepublic.com/sites/default/files/phc_response.pdf) - [http://www.newrepublic.com/sites/default/files/phc\\_response.pdf](http://www.newrepublic.com/sites/default/files/phc_response.pdf) - , emphasizing, “We do not seek to elevate one gender above the other, but rather esteem all students as being made in the image of the One who created the world.” PHC objected to the nature of *The New Republic’s* questions, saying they wrongly assumed that “the College views women who, sadly, have experienced sexual abuse or harassment as somehow having been deserving of their fate.” The school categorically denied engaging in victim-blaming: “We believe it is offensive to suggest that a person who has been assaulted was somehow ‘responsible’ for the crime that has been perpetrated against them.”

While declining to discuss the specifics of Sarah’s case, PHC disputed several points. The school denied that Corbitt said the “strange nature” of Sarah’s testimony about the incident was a reason to keep proceedings informal and that Corbitt said Sarah’s alleged perpetrator was “ ‘a nice boy’ (or words to like effect)” and discouraged her from filing a police report. PHC also denied that “anyone in PHC’s administration or leadership suggested that if a person had been sexually abused, God would have kept that person fully conscious to bear witness to it. Such a statement would be theologically indefensible, biblically inaccurate, and offensive”; that Corbitt instructed Sarah and her roommate, Rachel, “to delete potentially incriminating e-mails, text messages, and voice mails from the alleged perpetrator”; that Ryan was allowed to correct inaccuracies in Sarah’s statement; and that “anyone in PHC’s administration or leadership suggested or implied that Sarah was either lying about the incident or somehow ‘deserved it’ because she ‘seduced’ the alleged perpetrator.”

“In summary,” the statement read, “the College believed then, and believes now, that the

incident reported by Sarah was handled appropriately and that proper steps were taken to address the allegations.”

Similarly, PHC disputed several details of Claire’s account. The school said Corbitt never told Claire that PHC could not do anything about her allegation because her claim could not be proven and that PHC was more concerned with the fact that Claire had violated the school’s alcohol rules than her sexual-assault report. The statement continued, “Any assertion on your part that the College somehow protected male students or its own reputation at the expense of its female students is simply false.”

This past May, I called Dean Sandra Corbitt at her office. A woman answered the phone, saying, “Hello, this is Sandy.” But when I identified myself as a reporter with questions about PHC’s handling of sexual assault, the woman responded in the third person about the dean’s availability. “She’s getting ready to head out of town for vacation,” the woman told me. In a statement, PHC confirmed that the woman on the phone was Corbitt, who “was obviously surprised by having a reporter bypass normal telephone protocol in the Office of Student Life by securing her personal phone extension and dialing her directly.”

**B**efore Sarah dropped out of PHC in 2007, Corbitt was promoted to dean of student affairs. Rachel Leon wrote about her former roommate’s ordeal for a journalism class at PHC—or tried to, rather. The professor, Les Sillars, pulled her aside after class to tell her she was “making something out of nothing,” Rachel remembers. “He said he’d talked to Dean Corbitt and that there was no story.” (Sillars did not respond to a request for comment.)

John and Ryan have both continued about their lives. Now married with kids, John went from Patrick Henry to the U.S. Army. Ryan married a young woman from a Quiverfull family. They saved their first kiss for their wedding day, Ryan’s mother-in-law announced on social media.

Sarah, meanwhile, says dropping out of PHC wasn’t the end of the world. Home in Fort Myers that summer, she finally saw a real therapist. Within a few months, with \$900 in her bank account, she packed up all of her belongings into suitcases, put her trust in God, and—in the ultimate act of disobedience—left her father’s house for good.

Sarah moved up to Virginia to be closer to her friends at PHC, including Josh. The two married in May 2010—when she would have graduated. Sarah is still trying to finish her college degree. Her PHC credits didn’t transfer, so she had to start all over again. She takes online courses while working full time in Fort Myers in communications, her bubbly predisposition perfectly suited to the job. The week I visited, her husband, Josh, was doting, fetching her Chapstick and glasses of water, teasing her sweetly about her Taylor Swift notebooks. One day, Sarah and Josh plan to

have children and homeschool them.

If all had gone according to plan, Claire would have graduated this past spring from Patrick Henry College with a degree in international politics and policy. Instead, she moved to a small town in Vermont and began attending Lyndon State College, working toward a degree in social work. Last February, when we met for dinner at a local pub, she wore purple leopard-print suspenders and tight black pants. There is an “EAT MORE KALE” bumper sticker on the back of her car, whose radio was tuned to Vermont Public Radio. She explained that she hadn't eaten meat since her high school Christian youth-group days, inspired by a fast in the Book of Daniel. Looking for the passage, Claire reached for the Bible in her purse and then remembered that it has been quite some time since she has kept a Bible in her purse.

She wonders if she'd still call herself Christian if Patrick Henry's administration had treated her differently, or if she would have stayed at PHC and gone on to the successful State Department career she once thought to be her destiny. “I honestly can't even imagine how different things would be if I had been supported at that institution instead of silenced and ostracized,” she says.

In September, Claire left Vermont with her boyfriend, Raven, and hitchhiked through Florida, working with Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms. She acquired a puppy along the way and named him Manna, after the bread of life. As of January, Claire and Raven were living off the grid in the woods with a collective of campers who call themselves the Rainbow Family. She calls her parents with the cell phone her father gave her when she left, wishing her well on her journey. She seems at home on the road, like it may have been the right life for her all along. Claire plans to stay south for the winter, and eventually head west.

*Kiera Feldman is a member of the Ochberg Society for Trauma Journalism and has written for The Nation, Mother Jones, and elsewhere. This story was reported in partnership with the Investigative Fund at the Nation Institute.*



HIGHER ED

APRIL 13, 2014

# Patrick Henry College: You Can Trust Us to Fix Our Sexual Assault Problem

By **Kiera Feldman**

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**T**he March newsletter for Patrick Henry College's Alumni Association began with a notice that birth announcements were temporarily suspended. Instead, it was to be a "more sober edition," devoted to the fall-out from "[Sexual Assault at God's Harvard](http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116623/sexual-assault-patrick-henry-college-gods-harvard) - <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116623/sexual-assault-patrick-henry-college-gods-harvard> - " a story I wrote for *The New Republic* in March about the mishandling of sexual assault cases at the elite evangelical school. In my investigation, I uncovered allegations that the Patrick Henry administration treated sexual assault perpetrators with impunity, discouraged women from going to the police, and blamed victims for dressing or behaving immodestly. Over the past month, the school's administration, students, and alumni have responded to the story with an outpouring of public statements and online commentary.

Shortly after the story's publication, Patrick Henry released a statement announcing the hiring of "a specialized legal firm" to audit the school's policies and procedures regarding sexual assault and harassment. At the same time, the school maintained administrators "did not attempt to cover-up any sexual crimes" and "did not seek to blame women" for male students' actions. "The fact is that the information provided by the key individuals at the time differs from the allegations now related in the *New Republic* article," said the statement, which was read aloud during chapel. The student body responded with applause.

Some Patrick Henry students voiced their support for school administrators. "The monstrous Dean Corbitt described in the article is almost unrecognizable," a sophomore [wrote](http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/patrick-henry-college-responds/) - <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/patrick-henry-college-responds/> - in an email to the *American Conservative*. "She seems like a twisted distortion of the friendly, cheerful woman who is always seems [sic] to be willing to help out all the students."

By comparison, a statement from the Patrick Henry College alumni association suggested that alums have been far more critical of the administration than most current students. The alumni made several demands: transparency in PHC's audit; "better victim care to students when they come forward"; the hiring of a victim's advocate; and campus education "regarding issues such as consent."

PHC did not disclose the name of the "specialized legal firm" hired to run the audit, not even to its students. The school did not respond to follow-up questions from *The New Republic*. "The secrecy about the firm is just shady," a PHC junior told me. "The whole problem was that they've been dealing with these things behind closed doors."

A recent PHC graduate, who also asked for anonymity, expressed similar concerns, saying he worried that the process would be a "masquerade." He added, "I'm not optimistic about the prospects of a legitimately independent audit."

Patrick Henry founder and Chancellor Michael Farris also announced he had convened an "Alumni Review Committee" to "thoroughly examine our atmosphere, policies, practices, and experience in dealing with the kind of issues raised in that article." Farris explained that the nine-member committee "will be making recommendations to the Administration—which, of course, must make all final and formal decisions to become effective."

In a statement, the Alumni Review Committee announced that it would draft a policy to “educate students and staff about resources available to victims, set forth specific parameters for the College's response to victim reports, and include guidance for victims who report assault or abuse.” While the statement noted that the committee included attorneys with experience prosecuting sexual assault cases, only three of the nine members were named.

“Recent publicity, although flawed by errors and misrepresentations, nonetheless does us a service by prompting reflection on how to improve the College’s care for students in personal crisis situations,” read yet another statement issued by Patrick Henry. The college added that it was considering the creation of “Personal Support Advocates” outside the Office of Student Life.

Of all the developments at Patrick Henry in the past month or so, this was perhaps the most heartening: Daniel Noa, the president of the alumni association, reported back from the spring Board of Trustees meeting, where the article was discussed at great length. Noa wrote:

There was definitely a consensus among the board members, many of whom have had long associations with homeschooling, that sex education in homeschooling circles has often been quite inadequate, particularly in dealing with the issues of consent, assault, aggressive advances, and other relevant issues. The board instructed administration officials to look into models of how this could be addressed with students as part of the orientation process. Instructions were also given to look into expanding the provision for mental health needs that the college is already offering.

The Patrick Henry student senate then released a statement saying, in part, “We join our alumni in categorically rejecting all acts of sexual misconduct, harassment, and assault.” Noa is right in identifying cultural factors as the root of Patrick Henry’s problem. But sex education is just the tip of the iceberg. The fundamentalist Christian homeschooling culture that Patrick Henry comes out of is one that demands obedience to authority figures. “It’s a near-glorification of hierarchy,” a 2010 PHC alum [wrote](http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/another-phc-update/) - <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/another-phc-update/> - in to the *American Conservative*. “A husband is the wife’s God-given authority, the father is the child’s God-given authority.” It should come as no surprise that a culture that



teaches men that they have a God-given right to dominate women and children has a sexual assault problem.

*Kiera Feldman is a member of the Ochberg Society for Trauma Journalism and has written for The Nation, Mother Jones, and elsewhere.*



EDUCATION

OCTOBER 30, 2014

# Why Did the Ultra-Religious, Anti-Gay President of "God's Harvard" Suddenly Resign?

By **Kiera Feldman**

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Photo: Wikimedia Commons

**L**ate in the afternoon of Wednesday, October 15, the students of Patrick Henry College were called to an all-campus meeting. Patrick Henry College President Graham Walker announced his resignation, effective immediately. With his wife accompanying him on the piano, Walker bid the students farewell singing "I'd Rather Have Jesus," a song from his April 2006 inauguration ceremony.

Patrick Henry College officials were quick to say that Walker's abrupt resignation had "zero connection" with "[Sexual Assault at God's Harvard](http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116623/sexual-assault-patrick-henry-college-gods-harvard) - <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116623/sexual-assault-patrick-henry-college-gods-harvard> - ," a story I wrote in March for *The New Republic* about the mishandling of sexual assault and harassment

cases at the elite evangelical school. (Patrick Henry [maintained](http://www.worldmag.com/2014/10/patrick_henry_college_president_steps_down) - [http://www.worldmag.com/2014/10/patrick\\_henry\\_college\\_president\\_steps\\_down](http://www.worldmag.com/2014/10/patrick_henry_college_president_steps_down) - that Walker stepped down over a disagreement with the Board about the school's plans for raising enrollment.) In my investigation, I reported allegations that PHC administrators treated accused sexual assault perpetrators with impunity, discouraged women from going to the police, and blamed victims for dressing or behaving immodestly.

"It is no secret that there has been tremendous friction between the alumni community and Dr. Walker during the independent review process," Patrick Henry College Alumni Association President Daniel Noa wrote in a statement the night of Walker's resignation. Noa was referring to the "Alumni Review Committee" the school created to examine the issues raised in my article. (The college also announced the hiring of "a specialized legal firm" to audit the school's policies and procedures but [refused](http://www.newrepublic.com/article/117347/sexual-assault-patrick-henry-college-one-month-later) - <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/117347/sexual-assault-patrick-henry-college-one-month-later> - to disclose the name of the firm.)

In early August, the nine-member Alumni Review Committee [released its findings](http://homeschoolersanonymous.wordpress.com/2014/08/05/phc-independent-review-committee-releases-final-report-and-recommendations-on-campus-sexual-assault/) - <http://homeschoolersanonymous.wordpress.com/2014/08/05/phc-independent-review-committee-releases-final-report-and-recommendations-on-campus-sexual-assault/> - . The report grappled honestly with sexual assault and harassment and institutional failure. Clearly frustrated with Patrick Henry administrators, the report noted, "The Committee is unanimous in our belief that the responses we received from the College did not display the level of candor and transparency that we expected upon the formation of this Committee."

According to the report, Walker first instructed the committee "to abide by certain guidelines for the interviews." Then, it seems, the administration tried to stonewall the committee. The report continued, "According to Dr. Walker, College staff refused to be interviewed unless the Chair agreed to refrain from asking questions about the *New Republic* article and the incidents detailed therein."

The Alumni Review Committee also conducted a survey of 300 alums. Dean Sandra Corbitt told the committee that there had been four or five instances of "alleged sexual misconduct" at the school since 2006. But alums told a different story. "The survey responses revealed a radical difference between the allegations of sexual misconduct that students and alumni claimed to have reported and the small number reported by

Dean Corbitt," the report continued.

"We believe that the College's policies and practices on this issue need significant adjustment," concluded the Alumni Review Committee report, offering ten pages of recommendations. Chief among them: remove responsibility for handling sexual misconduct from Patrick Henry's Office of Student Life, so that the same people handing out punishments for things like dress code violation aren't the ones investigating reports and offering counseling.

Responding to the Alumni Review Committee report, Patrick Henry College founder and chancellor Michael Farris objected to the *New Republic's* investigation of the school, [writing](https://homeschoolersanonymous.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/farris_email.pdf) - [https://homeschoolersanonymous.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/farris\\_email.pdf](https://homeschoolersanonymous.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/farris_email.pdf) - , "Other campuses report multiple forcible rapes each year, and this magazine has focused on two incidents from years earlier that were clearly not on that level of criminality." While noting that more deliberation was needed, Farris [concluded](https://homeschoolersanonymous.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/mpf-irc-statement.pdf) - <https://homeschoolersanonymous.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/mpf-irc-statement.pdf> - , "I would expect our future path to be in substantial accord with the suggestions made by the [Alumni Review Committee]."

This was the backdrop for Patrick Henry President Graham Walker's exit two weeks ago. By then, many alumni felt like it was time for Walker to go. Walker had taken the president's job over from Farris in 2006, a time of campus upheaval referred to as "the Schism." Nearly one-third of the school's faculty resigned in protest of what they [said](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/18/AR2006051801995_pf.html) - [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/18/AR2006051801995\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/18/AR2006051801995_pf.html) - were "arbitrary limitations" on academic freedom in the name of a biblical perspective. Walker was brought in to quiet the unrest. Critics within the school saw Farris as hotheaded and anti-intellectual. "If it wasn't the Bible or the Constitution, Farris basically thought it was a waste of time," said one alum. "Walker was immediately adored. His manner is just completely different—he comes across as thoughtful, humble, and soft-spoken."

But others saw a different side of Walker. He often recounted his denial of tenure at the University of Pennsylvania, attributing it to anti-gay comments he'd made to colleagues and students during an orientation event. "I thought the freshmen needed some ability to resist the indoctrination that was going on," Walker once [said](http://www.eagleforum.org/educate/1997/sept97/efc_walker.html) - [http://www.eagleforum.org/educate/1997/sept97/efc\\_walker.html](http://www.eagleforum.org/educate/1997/sept97/efc_walker.html) - . Walker recounted this story again last

year in a [speech](http://anthonybsusan.wordpress.com/2014/01/18/when-shaping-culture-means-shaping-hate/) - <http://anthonybsusan.wordpress.com/2014/01/18/when-shaping-culture-means-shaping-hate/> - in Uganda shortly before Parliament passed the notoriously draconian Anti-Homosexuality Act (which was later [struck](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/02/world/africa/uganda-anti-gay-law-struck-down-by-court.html) - <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/02/world/africa/uganda-anti-gay-law-struck-down-by-court.html> - down).

Several former Patrick Henry students recalled Walker making fun of gays in chapel. "He openly mocked gay people all the time. He used to do what the students called 'gay hands,' where he would make them floppy at the wrist while talking in a stereotypical lisp," remembered Rachel Leon, a 2010 graduate. "I definitely do remember Walker (repeatedly) doing the limp-wristed 'gay hands' thing, while speaking in a lisp," added Tim Raveling, who was [expelled](#) from Patrick Henry in 2009 for writing a paper declaring himself no longer a Christian, in an email. In a statement from the school, Walker denied mocking gay people, saying it was a "hideous accusation." He continued:

Someone must have remembered, I suppose, that I have at times affected the tone of voice of that of a 'cool, surfer dude' from my home state of northern California, to humorously caricature the stereotypical West Coast point of view about some issue or another.

And then there's Walker's response when details emerged about Patrick Henry professor John Montgomery's past. In May of 2008, PHC journalism students happened upon a 1989 [Los Angeles Times](http://articles.latimes.com/print/1989-01-11/local/me-317_1_christian-law-school) article - [http://articles.latimes.com/print/1989-01-11/local/me-317\\_1\\_christian-law-school](http://articles.latimes.com/print/1989-01-11/local/me-317_1_christian-law-school) - about Montgomery. The *Times* quoted court documents in which Montgomery's wife accused him of bigamy and "severe beatings and kicks in the back." In the court filings, Montgomery denied the abuse allegations and countered that his wife was prone to "provoking conflicts." Furthermore, Montgomery explained, "She has refused to cook any of my meals for the past several years and for the past 18 months has rejected all marital intimacy."

According to Leon, Walker gathered the journalism students in a classroom—along with Provost Gene Veith and journalism Professor Les Sillars—and threatened them, saying that spreading the *Times* article constituted slander and libel. In a statement, Patrick Henry acknowledged the meeting:

Given the datedness of the information and the inappropriateness of circulating an uncorroborated press story about a professor solely with the intent of painting the professor in a negative light, the College sought to ensure that students understood the impropriety of replicating such a communication.

Over the years, some students—and especially alumni—started to see Walker as an authoritarian leader. This came out, for example, in 2009 when Walker [stripped](https://homeschoolersanonymous.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/walker-memo-to-weinmeister-9-1-09.pdf) - <https://homeschoolersanonymous.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/walker-memo-to-weinmeister-9-1-09.pdf> - the Student Body President of his responsibilities. The offense? Delivering a [speech](http://homeschoolersanonymous.wordpress.com/2014/08/27/the-day-we-fall-silent-is-the-day-we-dont-care-anymore-nikkis-story-part-three/) - <http://homeschoolersanonymous.wordpress.com/2014/08/27/the-day-we-fall-silent-is-the-day-we-dont-care-anymore-nikkis-story-part-three/> - that quoted sociologist and pastor Tony Campolo talking about poverty, saying, “Most of you don’t give a shit. What’s worse is that you’re more upset with the fact that I said shit.”

"You had to be pretty drunk on Kool-Aid to like that guy," one alum, who asked to remain anonymous, said of Walker. The friction between the alumni community and Walker during the Alumni Committee Review was an escalation of tensions that'd already been building.

"Alumni are generally happy [with Walker's resignation], but there are certainly the hold-outs—especially the younger alums, like those who graduated in 2014," said the anonymous alum. "Conservative homeschooled kids are taught to respect authority instinctively." In a private Facebook group, one member of the class of 2014 wrote of his “heartbreaking shock” at Walker’s resignation. Many students, he wrote, "speak of Dr. Walker as a close friend and spiritual mentor." On the Friday following Walker's announcement, Patrick Henry students wore bow ties in [homage](http://www.worldmag.com/2014/10/patrick_henry_college_president_steps_down) - [http://www.worldmag.com/2014/10/patrick\\_henry\\_college\\_president\\_steps\\_down](http://www.worldmag.com/2014/10/patrick_henry_college_president_steps_down) - to their departing president.

“When authority is placed in the hands of someone who loves control and believes their religion justifies almost any use of that control, you create a toxic environment," said the anonymous alum. "That's what happened under the Walker administration."

And so the Walker era comes to a close. Meanwhile, Sandra Corbitt—the dean who



directly handled the sexual assault allegations raised by *The New Republic*—remains at the head of Patrick Henry's Office of Student life.