

June 16, 2015

This is an open letter, addressed first and foremost to victims of sexual harassment within the profession of philosophy, and secondly, to all members of the APA.

Some of you have come forward and pressed complaints against your harassers, assuming the burden of embarking on a time-consuming and psychologically draining process. Some of you have reached out to the APA ombudsperson for resources and advice. Some of you have consulted officers at your institutions, and some of you have relied on supportive friends or colleagues. Some of you are silent victims. Many of you have not received adequate support from your colleagues and redress from your institutions. All of you, we assume, have had both your personal and your professional lives deeply affected by your experiences. These effects are likely to endure for years to come.

The damaging experience is not limited to the sexual harassment itself. Some of you have seen your harasser given what does not seem to be a penalty—for example, a paid leave of absence. Others have seen your harasser evade penalties by taking a new job. Some of you have not been believed, had complaints ignored or trivialized, and been treated as though it is you who is the problem. All of you who remain in the discipline of philosophy face the prospect of encountering your harasser in professional philosophical settings whether at your academic institution or at philosophical conferences.

We, the board of officers of the APA, want you to know that we recognize the hardship imposed on you and the structural obstacles to recognizing and addressing sexual harassment. We call upon all philosophy departments to commit to eliminating sexual harassment; the first step toward this is vigorously and immediately pursuing all allegations of sexual harassment. It is the responsibility of *all* members of the APA to know the legal definition of sexual harassment and the rules for bystander reporting under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. We strongly encourage all APA members to familiarize themselves with the [APA statement on sexual harassment](#). APA members need to be fully aware of the pervasiveness and impact of sexual harassment, and we recommend reading the narratives on the blog [What Is It Like to Be a Woman in Philosophy?](#) We encourage departments to avail themselves of the [Committee on the Status of Women's Site Visit Program](#).

Victims are encouraged to consult the [APA ombudsperson for nondiscrimination](#) for advice. When you attend professional meetings, we encourage you to call on supportive colleagues who can help you ensure a positive conference experience—for example, by setting up an informal buddy system. If you have a restraining order against your harasser, you should notify the APA prior to a divisional meeting, since your harasser may be barred from attending. Complaints of sexual harassment at APA-sponsored activities should be brought to the [APA ombudsperson for nondiscrimination](#). At APA divisional meetings, the APA placement ombudsperson, normally the chair of the [committee on academic career opportunities and placement](#), is authorized to receive complaints from individuals about institutions that fail to comply with Title IX with respect to sexual harassment or sex-based discrimination. We recently consulted with legal counsel regarding the APA's additional options for responding to sexual harassment; we explored sanctions such as denying conference registration by or revoking the APA membership of those found by their institutions to have committed sexual harassment, as well as supportive actions, such as providing victims

with a buddy system at APA meetings. Unfortunately, these kinds of measures open the APA to excessive legal liability.

We are committed, both personally and as the primary governing body of the association, to combatting the widespread and well-documented problem of sexual harassment in our profession and to supporting our colleagues who have been victimized by sexual harassment. We hope that all members of the profession will stand with us in condemning sexual harassment in all its forms, and in supporting victims of sexual harassment so that they may continue their professional lives as valued members of our discipline.

Signed,

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