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BY BRUCE GRAHAM

4 Directed by Chip Walton

May 2 - June 15, 2019

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SPREAD THE WORD!

21

REGIONAL PREMIERE



OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Division I football generates

BILLION

ANNUALLI



Players receive no compensation and cannot earn money from endorsements



Players spend 40-50 hours weekly on football activities during the season



College athletes are 18% less likely to graduate than non-athletes, and black players lagged by 24%



Only 1.5% of the players in Division I football will go on to play in the NFL

"Look, football and school don't go together. They just don't. Trying to do both is like trying to do two full-time jobs." - former UCLA star quarterback Josh Rosen

A Note from the Director

I have a confession.

I was a college sports fan long before I was a theatre fan. I grew up as a fan, living in small midwestern college towns dominated by humongous Division I universities, both much larger than the actual towns themselves. Fall afternoons were spent at football games; spring brought frequent trips to the NCAA Tournament. 1976: the Bicentennial Year, but my indelible childhood memory is parading in my pajamas through downtown Bloomington when IU won the national championship. 1981: the attempted assassination of President Reagan, but what I recall clearly was being in Philadelphia that day with tickets to the Final Four, childishly fretting about the games getting canceled or postponed. 1992: personally one of the more eventful years of my life, but my most vivid and heartbreaking memory was driving 1000 miles roundtrip to watch my UK Wildcats lose the "greatest basketball game ever played" to the evil Duke Blue Devils. And, 1994: the first time that I truly felt like a Coloradan, watching the CU Buffs football team pull off the "Miracle at Michigan," and hearing my entire neighborhood cheering from their living rooms. (Yes, including me.)

So when I first read *Sanctions*, I loved it because it was a play about sports. Playwright Bruce Graham is of same ilk; sports-loving-theatre artists. (It's admittedly a rather small group.) But then we had the exciting opportunity to work on developing the play together at the Colorado New Play Festival in Steamboat Springs. And after digging more deeply into the many fascinating layers of this play, I discovered that this was a play about so much more than just sports. It seems to me that sports functions like a prism for all that is both wonderful and unsatisfying about our country; a land of tremendous opportunity and egregious disparity, shared bonds and double standards, deep tribalism and blind loyalties.

We're living in a moment of long overdue re-evaluation, where the status-quo is deservedly shifting beneath our feet, and this play operates in that very same vein, upending our assumptions, questioning our priorities, and pushing us to think in new ways about some very old problems. Whether you are a sports fan or not, I know that the prism of this play will help us all move our thinking forward on some essential issues of our time, including the moral implications of capitalism, the prevalence and acceptance of sexual assault, systemic racism, and fanaticism and extremism in our contemporary culture.

We're simply thrilled to share *Sanctions* with our audiences – just the second production of this timely play in the world! And it's equally exciting to continue our artistic relationship with playwright Graham, whom audiences will remember from *Coyote on a Fence* and *White Guy on the Bus*.

Thanks for your support, and we're all looking forward to exploring these important issues with you through the powerful art of theatre.

Stay Curious,



Chip Walton Producing Artistic Director

Opportunity or Exploitation?

In the early 1980s, one of the first big whistle-blowing scandals broke in NCAA football when Dr. Jan Kemp filed suit against the University of Georgia, exposing the school's blatant disregard for athletes' education. Kemp was dismissed in 1983 after complaining two years earlier that nine players' grades were changed in a remedial English course to allow the athletes to play in the Sugar Bowl.

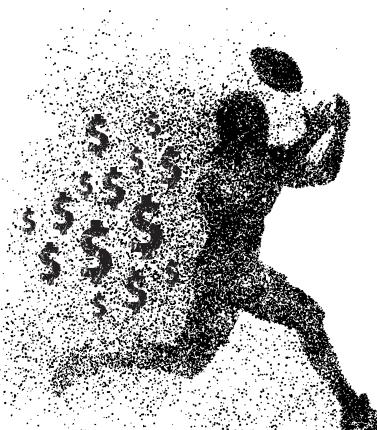
"All over the country, athletes are used to produce revenue. I've seen what happens when the lights dim and the crowd fades. They're left with nothing. I want that stopped." – Dr. Jan Kemp

Kemp was the inspiration for the character of Claire in *Sanctions*. And now, decades after Kemp's stand against the University, we see more exploitation of players, not less. The debate on keeping college athletes "amateur" in the wake of the tidal wave of revenue generated by these programs has been in headlines for years and heats up regularly as former college athletes speak out. The major counterpoint is that athletes receive an education in exchange for their talents on the field, yet cases like Kemp's and the many that have followed disprove that claim.

The crux of the matter is that schools are getting rich while athletes get nothing – no compensation, no sponsorships, no endorsements, and not even a viable education. While this surely isn't the case 100% of the time, this narrative

has played out often enough on the national stage that we know it has merit.

Playwright Bruce Graham dives into a number of issues in the underbelly of Division I football. First up – pressure to change grades to pass athletes. Grades matter, not education. The average collegiate football player spends as much time in team-required practices as the average adult spends at work. This leaves little time for schoolwork and study. Josh Rosen, a former star quarterback for UCLA argued "football and school do not go together."



In 2015, a top cornerback for Rutgers University, Nadir Barnwell, faced ineligibility. He had a failing grade in one of his classes and, due to regulations, he would not be able to play. When head football coach Kyle Flood discovered this, he took matters into his own hands, reaching out to advisors and Barnwell's professor asking for the grade to be changed. Flood pressured the professor into allowing Barnwell to do extra work for a new grade. She stated "I felt unable to resist". Ultimately, Flood was suspended for three games and fined fifty thousand dollars.

And why do we need these athletes on the field so badly? Why risk sanctions or suspension for changing grades? Why not demand that athletes earn their grades? Money. Big money. "The system has evolved into a profit-driven enterprise that has nothing to do with college," said New York Times reporter Mike McIntire. "Too many people are making too much money."

Twenty-four schools make more than \$100 million annually from their football programs alone. In many states, the highest paid public employee is the head football coach of a public university. Alabama's coach, Nick Saban, is the highest paid public employee in the country, \$11.1 million annually. In fact, the top 36 paid public employees in the nation are all football and basketball coaches.

And the money doesn't stop with the big-name schools. Smaller schools are often recruited for "guarantee games" in which a larger, dominant team plays the smaller school to ensure a win. The larger school pays the smaller one for the game, allowing the smaller school to earn revenue for their program. Unfortunately, these mismatched games too often lead to critical injury for players on the smaller team. That schools continue to cash in on these games is nothing more than valuing money over player safety.

After all these arguments, the final question looms: but once they go pro, it won't matter, right? The huge NFL paychecks mean athletes don't need to have really passed English and they negate those years playing for nothing while in college. But the reality is that less than 2% of college football players go on to play in the NFL, even for a moment, much less for a big contract. The remaining 98% often leave school without the skills to land a job and with four years of bodybreaking injuries.

The outrage shared by Kemp in 1981 continues to reverberate today with fresh stories surfacing each season. The money and power surrounding college football is so massive, it takes immeasurable strength to speak out in opposition for former players and professors, much less those caught in the crosshairs now. *Sanctions* explores a sliver of this world, of the pressure to succeed and deliver.

The biggest question in the middle of so many questions of compensation, fairness, and balance, seems to ring: Have we completely disregarded the 'student' in 'student-athlete'?



To learn more about *Sanctions*, go to our Go Deeper section on the Curious website: **CuriousTheatre.org/event/sanctions**

Curious Theatre Company

presents

SANCTIONS

by Bruce Graham Directed by Chip Walton

CAST

Dee Covington, Claire Ilasiea Gray, Tonya Adeline Mann, Abby Thony Mena*, Ronald

SETTING

A small American town dominated by a large university.

SPECIAL THANKS Gregory Towle - Denver Center for the Performing Arts

PRODUCTION TEAM

Assistant Director, Keyonne Session Set Design by Markas Henry ** Costume Design by Janice Benning Lacek Lighting Design by Shannon McKinney ** Sound and Projection Design by Brian Freeland Props Design by Donna Kanne Stage Manager, D. Lynn Reiland* Assistant Stage Manager, Brandi Glass Scenic Construction, You Want What Productions and Michael Morgan Scenic Charge Artist, Sara Talaba Board Operator, Nick Cozzo Wardrobe/Run Crew, Ana Langmead

Sanctions will be performed without an intermission.

Developed at the Colorado New Play Festival, Steamboat Springs, CO, 2018

SANCTIONS is produced by special arrangement with Alexis Williams, BRET ADAMS, LTD., 488 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036. www.bretadamsltd.net

SANCTIONS Was originally produced by Delaware Theatre Company, Wilmington, DE Bud Martin, Executive and Artistic Director

Special Thanks to Norma Twain

Bold = Curious Artistic Company Member *Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. **Member of United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 IATSE



Bios



Dee Covington (Claire) is a founding member of Curious Theatre Company. As an actor, Dee was last seen as Empty in *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide*.... Other noted Curious acting credits include Toni in *Appropriate*, Roz in *White Guy*

on the Bus, Margaret in Good People, Veronica in God of Carnage, Bev/Kathy in Clybourne Park (Denver Post Ovation Nominee, Supporting Actress in a Play), and The Homebody in Homebody/ Kabul (Best of Westword, Best Contemporary Monologue). Dee's selected directing credits at Curious include The Humans, Your Best One, Hand to God, the three-part The Brother/Sister Plays, Collapse, Dead Man's Cell Phone, Speech & Debate, and The Denver Project. She is also the program director for Curious New Voices, our nationally recognized youth playwriting program, currently celebrating its 15th season.



Ilasiea Gray (Tonya) is returning to the Curious mainstage in *Sanctions*. She was last seen playing Bunny in *Detroit '67*. She has also toured <u>Black</u>. throughout the community and been involved with several Curious New Voices projects over the years. Other

recent credits include: *The Little Prince* (Denver Children's Theatre), *American Prom* (THEATREWORKS), *Twist Your Dickens* (Aurora Fox), and *Men on Boats* (The Catamounts). She recently made history in Denver playing a princess of color in the title role of *Sleeping Beauty* (Denver Children's Theatre) as well. When not onstage, Ilasiea can be found working as a Teaching Artist (having served on DCPA's teaching staff for several years), directing children's theatre, and working in education capacities for law enforcement training and medical students. She also has a background as a Casting Associate. Ilasiea holds a BFA

in Theatre, Film & Television, and is a proud recipient of a *2018 True West Award* for her impactful work in the arts.



Adeline Mann (Abby) is making her Curious Theatre Company debut. Previous credits include: *Hooded, or Being Black for Dummies* (Aurora Fox Arts Center), *Pride and Prejudice* and *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* (Boulder Ensemble

Theatre Company), *The Rape of the Sabine Women...* (Local Theatre Company), *Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Comedy of Errors,* and *Twelfth Night* (The Wit Theatre Company/Shakesbeer). Adeline is a Colorado native and holds a BA in Theatre from the University of Denver. She also serves as the Creative Development Director for The Wit Theatre Company.



Thony Mena* (Ronald) is a DC-based artist who returns to Denver and Curious after playing the title character in *The Elliot Plays* trio. Recent credits: *The Brothers Size* (1st Stage), *Occupied Territories* (Theater Alliance), *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

(Adventure Theatre), *Mockingbird* (The Kennedy Center's Theatre for Young Audiences), *How We Got On, The Last Days of Judas Iscariot, Clementine in the Lower Nine* (Forum Theatre), *A Few Good Men* *Irish National Tour*, *Hair* (Keegan Theatre), *Much Ado About Nothing, All's Well That Ends Well* (Shakespeare Theatre Company), *Minnie the Moocher* (Pointless Theatre Company), and *Ruined* (Arena Stage). Thony received his BA in Theatre from the University of Maryland. Instagram: @ThonyBMena Website: www.ThonyMena.com

Bios

Bruce Graham (Playwright) - Curious has performed two of Graham's plays previously: White Guy on the Bus (2016) and Coyote on a Fence (2001). His other plays include Burkie, Early One Evening at the Rainbow Bar & Grille, Moon Over the Brewery, Minor Demons, Belmont Avenue Social Club, According to Goldmman, Desperate Affection, Stella and Lou, The Champagne Charlie Stakes, Funnyman, The Craftsman, North of the Boulevard, Rizzo, and The Philly Fan. Graham has won consecutive Barrymore Awards for Best New Play (Something Intangible, Any Given Monday) the Joseph Jefferson Award (The Outgoing Tide) and a Jeff nomination for White Guy on the Bus. White Guy on the Bus is currently nominated for the "Offie" - London's version of the Obie Award. His new play, Gary, opens next fall at the Eagle Theater. Graham recently returned to acting appearing as Ben Hecht in Moonlight and Magnolias, Ernie in Rumors, Eddie in Lost in Yonkers, Richard in Time Stands Still, Milt in Laughter on the 23rd Floor, Artie in Hurlyburly, and Arthur in Pterodactyls. His movie writing credits include Dunston Checks In, Anastasia, and Hunt for the Unicorn Killer. He also writes for television including Roseanne, Leg Work, Cedar Cove, The Most Wonderful Time of the Year, Trading Christmas, and The Good Witch. Along with Michele Volansky he is the author of The Collaborative Playwright. Graham is a graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania and teaches playwriting and film courses at Drexel University. He divides his time between Elkton, Maryland and South Philly with his wife Stephanie.

Brian Freeland (Sound and Projection Design) returns to Curious after designing *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide..., The Body of an American,* the three part *Elliot Plays, The Whipping Man, After The Revolution, The Elaborate Entrance Of Chad Deity, Bug, I Am My Own Wife, The Lieutenant Of Inishmore, 9 Parts Of Desire, Eurydice, Opus,* and *Homebody/Kabul.* A regionally and nationally recognized sound designer, he is a nine-time Colorado Theatre Guild Henry Award nominee, an eight-time Denver Post Ovation Award nominee and a Westword Mastermind Award recipient for his work on sound and projection design. Markas Henry (Set Design) designed scenery for The Humans, The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide..., Appropriate, the three part Elliot Plays, Lucky Me, All The Rage, The Whipping Man (Colorado Theatre Guild Henry Award), After The Revolution, God of Carnage, Maple and Vine, and Opus as well as costumes for White Guy on the Bus, The Whipping Man, Time Stands Still, Dead Man's Cell Phone, and Mall*Mart. His selected regional credits include work with Theatre Aspen, Opera Colorado, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Boulder Ensemble Theatre Co., The Old Globe, Geffen Playhouse, Westport Country Playhouse, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and the Contemporary American Theater Festival (24 productions). In New York he designed The Great American Trailer Park Musical, Old Wicked Songs, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged), and The Barrow Group's Pentecost (Drama Desk Award Nomination for Outstanding Production). Broadway credits include Thoroughly Modern Millie (Tony Award), The Life (Tony nomination) and Beauty and the Beast (Tony Award). His film work includes Elf and Leading Ladies. He worked as Costume Producer for Britney Spears' 2001 and 2004 US and World tours. Markas is an Associate Professor and Assoc. Chair & Director of Theatre at the University of Colorado Boulder.

Donna Kanne (Props Design) is back at Curious after designing for *Skeleton Crew, The Humans*, and *The Cake* earlier this season. Her other designs include *The Spitfire Grill* and *The Oldest Boy* for Vintage Theatre. Donna received her BFA in Theatre from Metropolitan State University of Denver.

Janice Benning Lacek (Costume Design) has been designing costume across the US and internationally for theatre, opera, and dance since 1987. Highlights include La Jolla Playhouse, A.C.T., Syracuse Stage, San Diego Rep, American University of Cairo, Egypt, and more than 26 productions of Shakespeare with the Colorado, Utah, and Oregon Shakespeare Festivals. CSF's *Richard II* was included by invitation in the US entry at the 1999 Prague Quadrennial. She also designed with Tennessee Shakespeare

Bios

Company: *Henry V, A Midsummer Night's Dream* (makeup designs), *Tempest* (makeup), and *Twelfth Night* (costumes). Janice is a former resident designer (and company member) and designed dozens of Curious productions from 1999 until 2009's production of Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice*. Janice has taught costume and theatre at the University of Memphis, University of Colorado at Boulder and Kenyon College. She joined the DU faculty last fall.

Shannon McKinney (Lighting Design) has designed more than 25 productions at Curious including *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism..., Building the Wall, Constellations, White Guy on the Bus* and *The Brother's Size*. Other designs include *The Diary of Anne Frank, Sin Street Social Club, Sense and Sensibility, Electric Baby, Mamma Mial, Sunday in the Park with George* (The Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities), *Love's Labour's Lost, Cyrano de Bergerac, Julius Caesar* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival), *The Snowy Day* (DCPA Theatre Company), and *Miss Bennet* (Boulder Ensemble Theatre Company). Regional designs include productions for Steppenwolf, The Goodman, The Court Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre, and The Alliance Theatre. Shannon has received seven CTG Henry Awards for Outstanding Lighting Design. She is a professor at The University of Denver Theatre Department.

D. Lynn Reiland (Stage Manager) is returning to Curious after Stage Managing *The Luckiest People* in 2018 and *Detroit* in 2015. Most recently she Assistant Stage managed the 2018-2019 Season at the DCPA – Theatre Company. Dana has been an ASM at the DCPA – Theatre Company for the past 14 seasons working on productions such as *Sonia and Vanya and Masha and Spike, The Legend of Georgia McBride, Ed, Downloaded, The Giver, The Whale, The 39 Steps, When Tang Met Laika, The Pillowman,* and Off-Center & Third Rail Project's immersive theatre experience *Sweet & Lucky.* She is fully committed to new play development having worked for the Colorado New Play Summit and id Theatre's Seven Devil's Playwrights Conference. Chip Walton (Director, Producing Artistic Director) co-founded Curious Theatre Company in 1997 and has served as Producing Artistic Director for the entire history of the organization. Named Denver's "2005 Theatre Person of the Year," he has directed 50 shows for Curious over the past 21 years and his work has garnered more than 100 local and national awards. In 2008, Curious was honored with the Mayor's Award for Excellence in the Arts. Chip has served as the President and Vice President of the National New Play Network, a network of professional, non-profit theatres across the country dedicated to the development and production of new plays for the American theatre. Chip was also selected in the inaugural class of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Livingston Fellows, recognizing exceptional non-profit leaders with significant potential for contribution, change and leadership in Colorado's nonprofit sector; additionally, he served on the Board of Directors of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation as their first Community Trustee. Chip has participated in the Visiting Professionals program at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, as well as serving on the Leadership Group for Imagine 2020: Creating a Future for Denver's Culture. He has directed in the National New Play Network Showcase of New Plays, the Kennedy Center's MFA Playwriting Festival in Washington, D.C., and accepted a National Theatre Company Award in New York for Curious from the prestigious American Theatre Wing. Most recently, Chip was honored to serve as a 2017 Aspen Ideas Festival Speaker.

Actors' Equity Association ("AEA" or "Actors' Equity"), founded in 1913, represents more than 49,000 actors and stage managers in the United States. Equity seeks to advance, promote and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Equity negotiates wages and working conditions, providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. AEA is a member of the AFL-CIO, and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. The Equity emblem is our mark of excellence. www.actorsequity.org

Discussion Questions



Some of these questions contain mild spoilers. Read early your own risk.

- 1. Should Claire's tutoring program be a necessary component to athletic departments? Would that help to prioritize the "student" in "student athletes" or is it lip service?
- 2. Do fans care about the level of transparency in college athletics?
- 3. Claire undergoes an interesting transformation at the end of the play to become an incredibly protective and righteous person. What do you think this seemingly rapid shift suggests about her as well as the history of the program?
- 4. Betsy DeVos and the Department of Education recently proposed changes to Title IX reporting that narrow the types of sexual assault cases that are required to be investigated by a school and add barriers for victims,

saying it affords more due process to the accused. What does this say about our nation's priorities? What impact do you foresee if these changes go into effect: On the victim? On the accused? On the school? On our culture?

- 5. With the recent attention on concussions and brain damage caused by football coupled with the issues illuminated by Bruce Graham, do you believe that football is a sustainable sport or is it too big to fail?
- 6. Should college athletes remain amateur? What changes would you propose to the current compensation system within NCAA sports? How would that impact the student athletes and how would it impact the schools, sponsors, and NCAA?
- 7. Other than sports, what are you fanatical about? A politician, a cause, a performaner or TV show?

All or Nothing

fan (n).

abbreviation of "fanatic"

fanatic (n).

a person marked by excessive enthusiasm and often intense, uncritical devotion



Ever seen a fan at a football game, face painted and sign-waving, screaming mad about a call, and thought "dude, it's just a game"?

Fans dive in unflinchingly – ready to battle it out that their team, their candidate, their cause, their (insert whatever here) is the best, even when they're not. Fans want to see the best and believe the best in the people, teams, and organizations they love. "To me," says playwright Bruce Graham, "*Sanctions* was always a story about people who blindly follow without thinking." We have all painted our face and screamed – whether figuratively or literally – at one point in our lives or another.

Our world is full of fandom, yet it is in sports where we see the zealous nature on full display. Americans spend billions every year on jerseys and other team merchandise to show our allegiance. We tune in to talking heads for stats that we in turn spout off to win arguments later that week. And when our team or our player does something questionable, we turn ourselves into a pretzel trying to justify, explain away, or dismiss the accusation.

The rabid fandom of sports is the perfect analogy for our lives today: we wash over any bad -any question- because we are committed to the cause, to the whole. And while that's not all bad, it does lead to a breakdown of discourse and entrenchment.

We cheer madly for our team, yet cannot fathom why the opposition can't see what's right in front of them. How can you cheer for a quarterback who has raped a woman? How can you vote for someone who made that joke? How can you listen to his music now? How can you eat that chicken?

What sports do in the open, we all do.

Our world is one of rampant fanaticism. We've become us vs. them in all things. We can't see the flaws of our own logic as we gloss over real issues in service to "the bigger picture". We've stopped searching for common ground and instead are searching only for a way to "win".

Bruce Graham's play explores the underbelly of Division I football, but more than that, it asks the question of all of us: **What would you do to win?**



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Who is Curious?

WE ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN IMPORTANT CONTEMPORARY ISSUES THROUGH PROVOCATIVE MODERN THEATRE

Now in our third decade, Curious Theatre Company is Denver's home for feisty, unapologetically progressive, professional theatre that you won't see anywhere else in Colorado. We have the guts to make theatre that can change the world.

We focus on plays with something to say, something to explore, something to make you curious. We focus on playwrights that have a unique point of view and thrilling storytelling, often introducing them to our region. Both onstage and off, we are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion and to paying our artists a living wage.

75% OF OUR PLAYS IN THE LAST 10 YEARS WERE WRITTEN BY WOMEN, LGBTQ+, OR PEOPLE OF COLOR.

We are deeply invested partners, allies, and leaders within the social justice community. We use theatre to launch conversation, both within our theatre and throughout our community.

As we launch our third decade here in Denver, we recognize the unique position we hold in this community and the unique impact this community has had on Curious. Working at the intersection of art and social justice, we stand as Revolutionaries linking arms with each of you – whether this is your first time in this old church or if you've made the pilgrimage for more than twenty years.



Gloria audience, 2019

We are Curious. And we hope you are too.

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23% of college women experience rape or physical sexual assault



Only 20% of these victims report to law enforcement

OBAMA Ending college sexual assault is a priority



TRUMP Stopping false accusations is a priority

Under the Obama Administration, sweeping overhaul was made to Title IV reporting and investigation, leaving many accused feeling they were denied due process. DeVos and the Trump Administration have proposed changes that not only roll back the Obama-era guidelines, but go much further in limiting what can be reported and who it can be reported to, leaving victims with little recourse.



DeVos's proposal will save colleges \$300,000,000+ over ten years *meanwhile* 34% of sexual assault victims drop-out

The pendulum of Title IV reporting and investigation on campuses has yet to find a balance that serves all students, but the recent plan by the Trump Administration will return us to an era of pervasive sexual assault, victim blaming and dismissal, and unsafe learning environments: **"Make America Rape Again"**?

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