



On Wednesday, March 4th, the Federalist Society of UCLA Law is hosting an event called “Freedom Feminism: The Best Way Forward in the Gender Wars.” The headliner of this event is Dr. Christina Hoff Sommers.

While the Federalist Society has every right to bring speakers of their choosing to UCLA, I am writing today to urge my fellow students who care about supporting victims of domestic violence and sexual assault to refrain from attending this event.

Dr. Sommers has thrown her support behind organizations that deny the devastating realities of domestic violence experienced by millions of women. Dr. Sommers claims that the discussion of sexual assault on campus is merely “paranoia,” “hysteria,” and “panic.” Most recently, Dr. Sommers has publicly defended a campaign that resulted in women receiving death and rape threats for engaging in a discussion of female representation in the mediaⁱ.

In January 2014, Dr. Sommers wrote an article for the Men’s Rights Activism (MRA) website *A Voice for Men*,ⁱⁱ a deeply misogynistic publication which was labeled a hate site by the Southern Poverty Law Center.ⁱⁱⁱ

Dr. Sommers’ association with *A Voice for Men* is appalling, particularly for any person who cares about ending the phenomenon of domestic violence. Their actions with respect to the White Ribbon Campaign, an international movement working to end violence against women and girls and to promote gender equity and healthy relationships,^{iv} are illustrative of their contempt for female victims of domestic violence. In response to this campaign, *A Voice for Men* created a copycat website^v in order to confuse people searching for the actual White Ribbon Campaign and to channel funds into their own organization.^{vi} This website includes an article that makes the following abhorrent statement about the nature of domestic violence:

*“I can tell you what domestic violence really is. It’s a couple, one or both of them likely drunk, escalating a fight till it gets physical. It’s two desperate, out-of-control people, clawing at each other out of fear and rage. It’s impulse, reckless dysfunction **that as many times as not has the two people in the bedroom enjoying makeup sex not long after it is over** and then building the tension between them till it happens again.”^{vii}*

This is the kind of organization that Dr. Sommers chooses to support.

In May 2014, Dr. Sommers released a video on the American Enterprise Institute YouTube channel denying the existence of rape culture. In this video, Dr. Sommers claims that the wave of women speaking out about campus sexual assault and the resulting administrative failures are “paranoid” and part of a manufactured “rape crisis panic.”^{viii} She refers to the discussion as “hysteria,” a misogynistic term that has been used to invalidate and pathologize women for hundreds of years.

Dr. Sommers refers to the leaders of the movement to discuss rape on college campuses as “conspiracy feminists.” To use Dr. Sommers’ own words:

“Feminist activists have persuaded many young women that a foolish drunken hook up was actually felony rape.”^{ix}

And, in reference to why women make false allegations of rape, Dr. Sommers said:

“Sometimes they have taken one too many feminist theory seminars and came to believe that a drunken or regretted sexual encounter constitutes felony rape.”^x

Furthermore, Dr. Sommers, both as a speaker on MSNBC and on her YouTube blog *The Factual Feminist*, supported the #GamerGate movement, which has resulted in countless women being harassed, doxxed, and threatened with both rape and death.^{xi} One of the most vocal critics of the representations of women in video games, Anita Sarkeesian, had to cancel a speech at Utah State University after school staffers received a threat of "the deadliest school shooting in American history" if the event wasn't canceled.^{xii}

As an American citizen, Dr. Sommers has the right to make these claims, despite the harm that they bring to victims of sexual assault and victims of domestic violence. And the Federalist Society has every right to bring people like Dr. Sommers onto our campus to spread their messages.

But we all also have the right to refuse to support such harmful and hateful speech. We have the right to abstain from lending credence to these views. I will not be attending this event, and I urge my fellow students to do the same.

Lisa Smith
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ⁱ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RVICvBd21w&list=PLytTJqkSQqtr7BqC1Jf4nv3g2yDfu7Xmd&index=11>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.avoicemen.com/men/masculinity-is-more-than-a-mask/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2012/spring/misogyny-the-sites>

^{iv} <http://www.whiteribbon.ca/who-we-are/>

^v <http://whiteribbon.org/>

^{vi}

http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2014/10/24/mra_and_paul_elam_lures_people_away_from_anti_domestic_violence_site_with.html

^{vii} <http://whiteribbon.org/domestic-violence-research/domestic-violence-the-real-victims/>

^{viii} <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKgrYVtYSCk>

^{ix} *Id.* at 3:52.

^x <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZrzCAuiw7w&list=PLytTJqkSQqtr7BqC1Jf4nv3g2yDfu7Xmd&index=5> at 2:40.

^{xi} <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4NEQm5IUqM>

^{xii} <http://www.cnn.com/2014/10/15/tech/utah-anita-sarkeesian-threat/>