

Locker Room Talk

*Written by Lilian McCarthy, Concord Academy Panel Member
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It's hard to address every layer of wrong, pain, and terror that Donald Trump has evoked in these past two weeks (and beyond). Needless to say, as we watched Trump debase female identity in boasting about sexual assault with Billy Bush, and then watched Anderson Cooper coolly attempt to show him that he was denying physically recorded evidence, the outrage across the nation was palpable. However, not everyone in our country was outraged for the proper reason. It is utterly deplorable that people in the United States found it acceptable remain as Trump's supporters. These people have somehow decided that yes, the election is rigged by the media and/or the Democratic National Committee; yes, Hillary Clinton should be thrown in jail; yes, white men with guns should patrol the polls to make sure that no cheating takes place (code for "no black people should vote or else Trump won't win"); yes, boasting about sexual assault is acceptable and just another thing that cool guys do. It is the phrase "locker room talk" that is so deeply troubling, and what has been sticking with me, and many other people, as we move towards the election.

"Locker room talk" is essentially a reiteration of "boys will be boys," another excuse for privileged men to mistreat others, for nobody to call them out on their bad behavior, and another way that the patriarchy reinforces steel-trap gender roles. Trump's usage of "locker room talk," however, is more than that. It's more than just two ten year old boys running into the house covered in mud and their parents saying, "oh well, boys will be boys." It's more than mothers saying that "boys who are mean to you actually like you—that's how boys are" when you tell her about bullies on the playground. It's even more than boys catcalling young women as they walk down the street and the whole world shrugging this terror off as just another thing boys do. This is sexual assault. This is women's bodies being violated. These are experiences that scar women for life. And this is what Donald Trump is boasting about. He boasts about his immorality—and yet we are supposed to write this off as locker room talk? I am terrified to imagine boys at my school praising each other for grabbing girls' body parts without consent in the locker room next to mine. Is this what locker rooms are actually like? No, I am fairly certain that they're not. In fact, to quote a senior male tri-varsity athlete at Concord Academy, "While there may be more jokes and crass words than outside the locker room, in my four years at CA, I've never heard anything said about degrading women or sexually assaulting them."

Regardless of what locker rooms currently are, it's deeply disturbing to imagine a country in which our president encourages by example and teaches men to objectify, mistreat, and assault women, and subsequently writes these actions off as another casual thing guys do. Donald Trump has been charged for raping a 13 year old girl. Countless women have identified him as a sexual assaulter. And he was indisputably recorded bragging about these actions. This is not locker room talk. This is not "boys will be boys." This is so much more. We cannot excuse Trump's

actions as those similar to what “boys will be boys” condones. Alone, this toxic phrase normalizes and encourage inappropriate behaviors from boys because it’s “how they’re supposed to be.” That phrase is terrible and certainly should not govern Trump’s moral compass. This is physically recorded evidence. This is not locker room talk, not at CA nor most other places. This is not okay. This is our presidential candidate.