

# Moving Documentary Gets Students Talking About Rape

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The screening of the documentary “No!” was presented to a crowd of 400 Howard students last night in Cramton Auditorium. Presented by the DC Rape Crisis Center, the screening was a huge success.

The documentary was produced, written and directed by one woman, Aishah Shahidah Simmons, with a powerful message to deliver.

Before the screening went underway, freshman English major Candace Merrit knew she was going to be viewing something that would be enriching.

“I came out to view the documentary just because of the powerful title ‘No!’ That one word sums up what it means to be raped or sexually assaulted,” said Merrit.

“I know it’s going to be a great documentary,” said Georgetown student Kayla Salerno. “Aishah Simmons is an award winning filmmaker. I have seen her documentary Broken....Silence, and it was amazing.”

“No!” told the personal stories of black women who have survived being sexually assaulted. Historians, professors and civil rights organizations were also featured in the documentary.

“One of the stories that touched me the most was the woman, Salamaisha Tillet, who was raped as a college student by a frat guy she dated,” said senior political science major Maurice Jones. “She was innocent.”

“I think a lot of college women do not realize some of the risk they take when they go to parties and drink because they do not believe it can happen to them,” said Jones.

Elaine Brown, a former Black Panther Party chairwoman, discussed the silence within the black community and how it further victimizes the black woman.

“During the movement, black women were forced into silence. Before I became chairwoman, I saw and ignored it because I was told it was unimportant and that we had bigger issues,” said Brown.

One woman discussed her sexual assault encounter with one of the highest-ranking professionals at her university who invited her to his apartment.

She related her experience to Mike Tyson’s rape conviction when Desiree Washington went into his room. Many people asked, “What was she doing in his room?” as if that was the reason she was raped.

Men Stopping Violence Inc., an organization that gathers men who commit these crimes and forces them to take responsibility, was featured in the documentary.

A representative of Men Stopping Violence Inc., Ulester Davis was featured in the documentary. He believes that black men need to be held accountable for protecting women.

“We are the ones who commit the crimes. We force our women to be afraid and feel like they have nowhere to turn. Is it so hard to love our women? It is ultimately up to us to protect them,” said Davis.

Dr. Aaronette M. White, a Pennsylvania State University professor, voiced that black women are not given justice when it comes to sexual assault. She said that white women are given more justice when it comes to sexual assault than black women and that is an issue.

After the screening the audience participated in a panel discussion that featured Simmons, White and author Lori Robinson.

Robinson, author of “I Will Survive: The African-American Guide to Healing from Sexual Assault and Abuse,” was in tears as she was discussed Simmons’ dedication and strength after being a survivor of incest and rape.

An audience member brought up the fact that so many women internalize incidents of abuse to the point that they become angry at themselves. Victims often believe they are to blame regardless of whether the abuse happened when they were a child or defenseless to stop it.

“It is important to get into a group or individual therapeutic session. From these sessions, other help can venue through those sessions,” White said.

“This was great for an issue as important as it is to be addressed. I never knew that it was this deep,” senior film major Brianna Williams said. “Our community has issues that aren’t being given care. I feel it’s important that we take care of each other so that things like rape don’t happen.”