

Yale Student Saifullah Khan Found Not Guilty in College Rape Trial

By Megan Reynolds



A New Haven jury acquitted Saifullah Khan, a 25 year old Yale student accused of sexual assault in 2015, in what the New York Times calls a “rare college rape accusation to be tried in courts.”

Khan was accused of rape by a former classmate; the incident in question occurred on Halloween night in 2015. The testimony, which was held in an open courtroom, shed some light on the details

of these cases, which are often conducted behind closed doors on campus across the nation. Per the Times, the defense worked to discredit the victim’s statements, asking pointed questions about how much she had to drink, what she was wearing, and whether or not she was flirting with him via text message in the days prior to the incident. At one point during the testimony, lawyers for Khan asked why the victim chose to dress as a

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cat for Halloween—suggesting that her costume was inappropriate—and asked why she didn’t choose to go as “Cinderella in a long flowing gown.”

While many college rape cases are litigated behind closed doors by campus officials, a fair amount have made it to criminal courts. Perhaps the most well-known is Stanford’s Brock Turner, who was convicted of sexual assault in 2016;

in Turner's case, he was punished for the crimes he committed, but the punishment was light. Turner appealed his conviction in December, saying that he did not get a fair trial because of the exclusion of character witnesses who attested to his honesty, his swimming record, and what a good and upstanding young man he was.

What makes Khan's case resonate is the era in which he was being tried. Khan's defense lawyers blamed the current reckoning of sexual predators for his case making it to trial at all, saying that Yale was making Khan a "scapegoat" for its previous mishandling of sexual assault cases in the past.

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Does it matter if she did? ■