

## Yale Student Found Not Guilty of Raping Classmate in Rare Campus-Assault Trial

By Lisa Ryan



Yale student Saifullah Khan.

Yale student Saifullah Khan, 25, was suspended by the university after being accused of sexually assaulting a female classmate on Halloween night, 2015. On Wednesday, he was found not guilty of rape, following a court trial in which defense attorneys repeatedly attempted to discredit the alleged victim for drinking and not wearing a more modest costume.

As the New York Times reports, the trial against Khan was noteworthy given just how few campus rapes make it to trial — and how rarely these cases involve open court testimony. Although certain cases, such as that of former Stanford swimmer Brock Turner, do see the inside of the courtroom, the Department of Justice estimates that only 4 to 20 percent of female college students who are raped actually report their sexual assault to authorities. The case also highlighted the divide between the legal system and the #MeToo movement.

The complainant testified in the trial that she had fallen asleep on her dorm room bed and woke up in the middle of the night with Khan on top of her as he pinned down her arms and raped her, the New Haven Register reports. According to the Times, attorneys representing Khan tried to discredit the alleged victim, claiming she was the sexual aggressor.

Khan's lawyers repeatedly asked the alleged victim how much she had to drink and why she was able to remember the assault but not other details. They insinuated that she had been flirting with Khan via text message days before the alleged rape. The lawyers also showed off the complainant's black cat outfit — her Halloween costume — and asked why she hadn't worn something more conservative or dressed up like "Cinderella in a long flowing gown." Per the Times:

*"You remember a lot more than you are telling us," Norman A. Pattis, a defense lawyer, told the complainant. "Hadn't you sat on Mr. Khan's lap and kissed him?"*

Defense attorneys also accused Yale of using Khan as a scapegoat for the university's previous mishandling of sexual-assault claims. Yale declined to comment to the Register and an attorney for the alleged victim declined to comment to the Times. ■