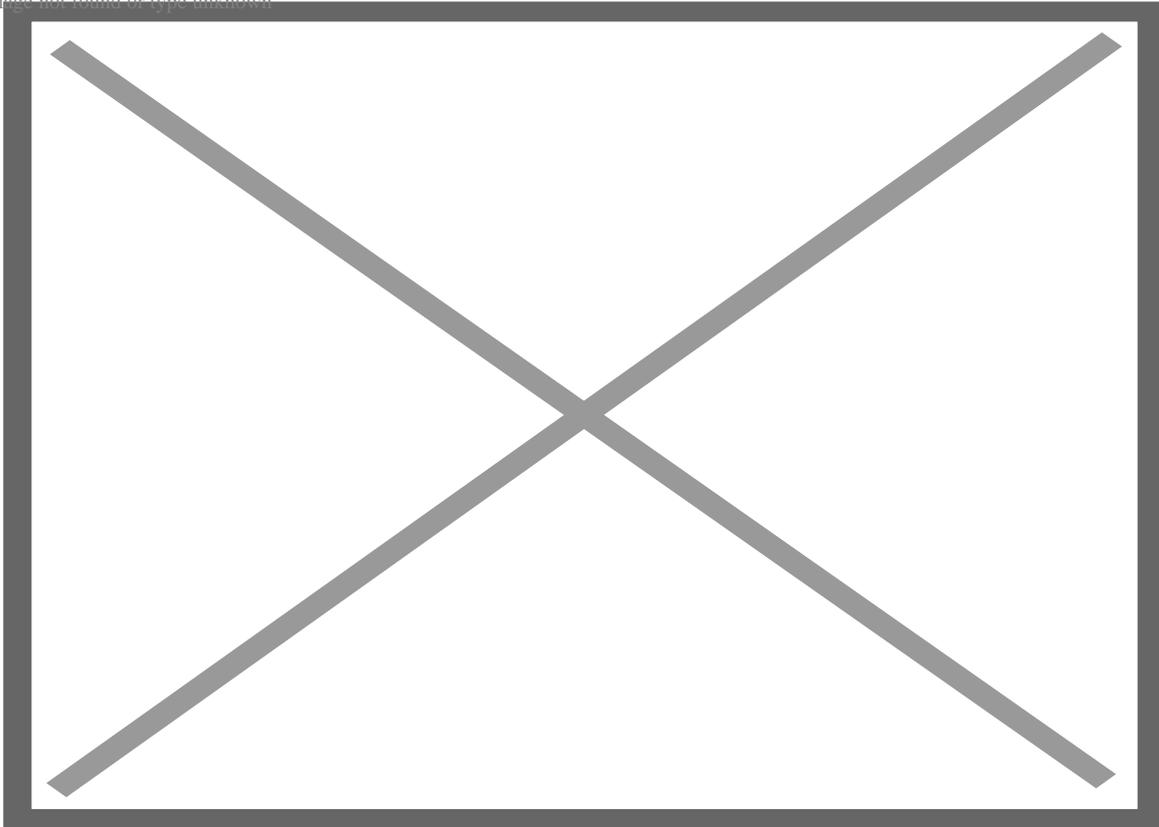


Image not found or type unknown



Hardly On The Hunt For Facts

Publish Date:

June 2017

The ABC and the Australian Human Rights Commission have teamed up with far-left student activists for a blatant propaganda campaign about campus sexual assault and harassment.

Tomorrow the ABC is broadcasting a “documentary” called *The Hunting Ground* which, the ABC website says, “takes audiences to the heart of a shocking epidemic of violence and institutional cover-ups across college campuses in America”.

In reality, *The Hunting Ground* is an activist piece replete with factual inaccuracies and exaggerated claims.

The film highlights two long since debunked cases.

The first is about Harvard Law School student Brandon Winston, who in the film is alleged to have drugged the drinks of two women, and taken them back to his apartment where he sexually assaulted them.



As *Slate* magazine's Emily Yoffe discovered in a groundbreaking investigation back in 2015, they were not drugged by Winston. The cocaine was supplied by one of the women. A DNA test found that a bloody condom, claimed to be further evidence of rape, had no connection to Winston. He was ultimately cleared of all felony charges and reinstated by Harvard, after almost four years of suspension. Nineteen Harvard Law School professors have slammed the "unfair and misleading portrayal" of Winston in *The Hunting Ground*, which they describe as "propaganda".

The second is about Florida State University star quarterback Jameis Winston (no relation to Brandon). It is alleged that he drugged a woman, forced her back to his apartment and raped her on a bathroom floor.

However, two toxicology reports established that there were no date-rape drugs in the woman's system that evening. The woman's claims changed over time, and did not match the physical evidence or other witnesses. The case did not go to court. Winston was cleared of sexual assault claims at a university hearing headed by a retired Florida Supreme Court justice.

Nevertheless, two young African-American men, with no previous criminal history, had their reputations dragged through the mud for years.

The ABC should be ashamed of itself for spreading these false claims.

The Hunting Ground also uses refuted statistics about rape and sexual assault on US campuses. The documentary cites the extraordinary claim that 20 per cent of university women are sexually assaulted. The US Bureau of Justice found that the number is closer to 2.5 to 3 per cent — a disgrace, but substantially less than asserted. In fact, the rate for students is lower than for those who do not attend college.

The creators of the film have themselves admitted that its purpose is propaganda, not truth. When soliciting interviews for the film, producer Amy Herdy stated that the film is about "advocacy for victims" and that they see no "need to get the perpetrator's side".

If the screening proceeds tomorrow night the ABC should at the very least accompany it with a reasoned analysis of the subsequent history of the cases at the heart of the film.

The Australian Human Rights Commission, not to be outdone by the ABC, is in on this mess as well. Last year it launched a national survey on sexual assault at universities with help from The Hunting Ground Project Australia — which organised screenings of the debunked film — and the National Union of Students.

The results are yet to be published, however the survey is profoundly loaded. Before asking about experiences, the commission provides a lengthy 14-point definition of sexual harassment which includes "staring", "jokes" and "gifts". This goes far beyond community expectations and the legal definition — which includes a reasonable person test. It demonises all sorts of courteous interaction between men and women.



Human Rights Commissioner Gillian Triggs has called the collaboration “unique”. It is uniquely improper. The commission is teaming up with a bunch of far-left propagandists, and legitimising, developing and spreading their dishonest claims. The first act of the new president of the Human Rights Commission should be to shut down this farcical inquiry.

Triggs has said the survey builds on the “the important work of the National Union of Students in their ‘Talk About It’ survey”. The NUS claims there is “war on women”, and cites the self-selecting survey that would make their American counterparts gush. They claim 72 per cent of female Australian university students are victims of sexual assault or harassment. This number is not believable. The Australian Bureau of Statistics victimisation survey, albeit not including harassment, has found 0.4 per cent of adult Australians have experienced a sexual assault in the past year.

Every single case of sexual assault and harassment, on and off campus, should be handled with the full force of the law. However, it is important that our response to this serious issue is based on analysis of the facts — not propaganda and fiction.

Taxpayer funds through our public broadcaster and Human Rights Commission should not be spent promoting a debunked documentary and a campaign premised on falsehoods.

For more on this topic Matthew’s comments click [here](#).

Original Link:

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/hardly-on-the-hunt-for-facts/news-story/8fd43987bb83ec67f17fa64601df735d>

Originally published in:

The Australian