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Don't Stay Silent: Network of Female Professors against Gender Violence at University of São Paulo (USP)

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Abstract

Sexual and gender violence against students has become more visible in the past years in the universities in Brazil. The experience of violence impacts students' health and well-being and has a detrimental effect in their academic life. This is seen as a challenge that requires action from the institutions and members of the academic community. The objective of this article is to share the work of the collective named Rede Não Cala! (Network Don't Stay Silent!) which was constituted in 2015 and gathers around 200 lecturers and researchers of the University of São Paulo. This collective aims to build strategies for coping and challenging violence in the workplace. The main actions of the collective are to listen and advocate for people who suffered violence, to develop communicative and pedagogical actions and to improve the administrative mechanisms of denunciation and legal actions. After three years of intense work with sexual and gender violence issues, we observe an increase in awareness about the subject and a higher level of assistance for those who suffered violence, particularly students, despite the difficulties associated with the economic crisis and austerity policies that affect the University. The Rede continues to demand that the University adopts effective measures to fight sexual and gender violence, as the strategy of welcoming cases without the provision of institutional support has proven to be insufficient.

In this article we present the experiences of a group of female professors and researchers of the University of São Paulo¹ in Brazil. We discuss the work done in the last three years to break the silence about sexual and gender violence in the University, and the contradictions, ambivalences, relationships, concepts and actions generated in the process. We are part of a self-led movement called Rede Não Cala, which can be translated as, "Network Don't Stay Silent", launched in 2015².

The University of São Paulo is located in southeastern Brazil, the country's most affluent region, in the city of São Paulo, with a population of more than 12 million inhabitants. Brazil is a country full of inequalities, having experienced almost 400 years of slavery and few periods of democracy. With respect to violent crimes the number of homicides in Brazil increased by 14% between 2006 and 2016, with 62,517 persons killed in 2016. It is also a racist country. In the same period, the number of homicides of black women increased by 15.4%, while that of white women dropped 8% (Cerqueira et al., 2018). Brazil has the fifth highest rate of female homicide in the world, with a rate of 4.8 per 100,000 (Waiselfisz, 2015), and is the country with the highest homicide rate of transgender people in the world (Balzer, LaGata & Berredo, 2016). It is a country of contrasts, where huge gay pride parades are organized every year in the larger capitals and strong feminist movements coexist with rage, sexism, homophobic behavior and intolerance.

The feminist movement has been active in the country since the end of 1970's, and in the 1980's Special Police Stations for Women were created. The creation of a Women's Ministry at the federal level in 2003, and the Maria da Penha Law, a comprehensive law

¹ The University of São Paulo was founded in 1934. It is the largest public university in Brazil with 42 learning departments on 7 campuses, six of which are located smaller cities of São Paulo estate. The city of São Paulo comprises three campuses (the largest being the University Center), with 58,823 students enrolled in graduation programs, 30,000 in post-graduation, 7,541 special students, 5,844 teachers, 14,864 technical and administrative staff (yearly statistics USP, 2016).<https://uspdigital.usp.br/anuario/AnuarioControle#>

² Since its constitution the Rede has been involved in combating sexual violence. Although as professors we attempt to discuss gender issues in a broader sense, most cases that we face involve aggression towards women, especially students, by male students and to a lesser extent by professors. Some cases involve assault against male students, mostly homosexuals, and transgender.

against domestic violence in 2006 are important public policy landmarks that were pushed forward by the work of social movements. Reference centers on violence against women were created across the country and the idea that violence against women (and others groups) is unacceptable is gradually becoming more widespread. Abortion is illegal in the country unless in cases of pregnancy by rape or of risk of life for women. Since 1989, the public health system has created services to provide assistance in cases of legal abortion and sexual violence. This implementation has been difficult and faces much resistance in a country where catholic and evangelical church leaders have significant power, with strong representation in the federal congress and state governments.

In 2016, the elected president Dilma Rousseff was deposed by a parliamentary coup, with the support of big media and part of the society. The new government implemented austerity measures that imposed huge cuts to social programs. With a cabinet composed almost exclusively by men³, the new president started to accept the demands of conservative sectors, drastically reducing rights and part of the protection system created after the promulgation of Brazilian Constitution of 1988. We are now facing difficult times for the human rights and feminist struggles, with the loss of several achievements and the strengthening of conservative sectors that oppose programs such as sex education in schools or campaigns to disseminate information about HIV.

Despite a very adverse context, feminism has become again very popular among young women. New agendas and methods of organization are being implemented, such as feminist collectives in universities. The issue of consensual sex, the ownership of one's own body, sexual freedom, racism and opposition to other forms of oppression are important themes for this new generation of feminist and LGBT+ groups.

³ Women are still a minor percentage of the legislative and executive branches in Brazil, in spite of a mandatory requirement that 30% of all parties' candidates be women

A beginning: breaking the invisibility

University of São Paulo (USP) is a public university and, traditionally, the public universities in Brazil are the best rated and their students generally wealthier in comparison to students in private universities. When the first denouncement of sexual violence committed by male students against female students reached the public opinion, which involved persons studying important courses such as medicine, engineering, etc. the university community's reaction was surprising. It was difficult to admit that white, heterosexual, wealthy under-graduate boys could be rapists. It shook the previous stereotype of the rapist, which was someone who was unknown, black and a poor man in a dark street at night.

Unfortunately, sexual violence against students takes place quite frequently. One of the few studies with big samples, which was conducted in 2015 on 1,823 university students (Instituto Avon, 2015), from public or private schools in the country, revealed that 11% of Brazilian female university students reported an attempt of sexual violence when they were under alcohol intoxication, 14% reported dissemination of images or videos without consent 28% reported either rape, sexual abuse, unconsented touching or kisses and 36% of the respondents quit certain university activities due to fear of aggression⁴.

In 2014, reports of violence from the School of Medicine made headlines in the press and the university. The first case, which occurred in 2011 but was reported afterwards, turned even worse when it was determined that the same student had reportedly been involved in at least two other cases, also with USP students as victims. The daily

⁴ Studies from many countries show the magnitude of this problem within university communities, particularly among the student population. Even though the definitions for sexual violence differ between studies, sexual assault appears to affect around 1 in 4 students in universities across Canada (DeKeseredy, 1993) and the United States (Fisher 2000). Despite the high level of occurrence, they are often not viewed as acts of violence and/or go unreported (Ullman 2010, Valls, 2016), which leads institutions of higher learning to develop and implement policies to address this issue, which many have already done (Halstead, 2017). According to the virtual platform *Distintas Latitudes* (2016) there is no official data on sexual violence in Latin American universities, and out of 63 universities from 11 countries consulted by the site, only 12 had any protocol for victim assistance.

newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo* reported, that the student was charged with doping and raping at least three female students. One of the victims, also an USP student, reported that she was doped at a medical students' party. She also said that she fell asleep, woke up while being raped and tried to react and shout, but was immobilized by the accused. In order to intimidate the young woman, the man claimed to be a police officer. She went to the police and made a charge against him as rape, and also reported what happened to the University. In this case, the accused claimed that the relationship was consensual (Souza, 2016). This situation was not addressed adequately by the university and the accused student was allowed to continue to study and graduate in medicine. Pressure from, and manifestations by students and professors alike led to an internal investigation which resulted in a one and a half year suspension for this student, at the end of which he would be able to graduate⁵

In 2014 there was another report, this time it was a female student who reported being sexually assaulted by two male students at a university party. She wrote a letter to the director of her department requesting that an internal investigation be made. The response she was given after the internal investigation was that, since they had all been consuming alcohol, no act of violence had been committed, blaming all three persons involved: the victim and the aggressors⁶.

These cases and others from 2013, 2014 and 2015 reached a few professors and researchers who worked with issues of gender, sexuality and human rights. They worked on shedding light on violence and on showing how hard it is to expose cases like these at the university. Feminist student groups started to organize themselves, receiving and dealing with cases of violence, but faced great difficulties, as there were no mechanisms at the institution for denouncing violations, making perpetrators accountable, and protecting the victims. Many of these reports were not investigated by the board of

⁵ The suspension was considered to be an extremely lenient punishment and generated a number of protests from both female students and teachers alike.

⁶ The text was based on the actual experience of the Network. We know that violence is not limited to episodes of men against women, as we have dealt with cases involving only women, only men, as well as transgender and non-binary persons. However, most of the cases that come to us involve women that are abused by almost always heterosexual male students.

directors of the respective schools and institutes, and most of the students who were assaulted were judged on their sexual morality, and not considered to be victims of violence. The perpetrators were often considered to be good students and therefore incapable of committing such acts. Apart from this, there was the naturalized view that young men go through a stage in life in which they become sexually active, and acting on this desire is permitted and encouraged, while women are expected to know how to behave and how to protect themselves.

The dissatisfaction with this whole scene meant looking towards the Congress of São Paulo State for help. This led to the forming of a Parliamentary Inquiry Committee (CPI) in 2015 to investigate situations of violence in the University. Congress members, students, professors and university authorities were active participants on this committee. The CPI's report caused shockwaves due to the large amount of documented evidence, testimonies and video recordings of physical and sexual violence, and psychological harassment occurring at the university in sporting activities, fraternities, parties and even in classrooms. Groups of female students, professors and other people invested in this issue substantiated the presence of "structural" violence contrary to what most institution directors believed: that these cases are incidental, committed by "bad apples" who have been negatively influenced by outside factors, and that they should be addressed within the institution and not made public. There was a lot of pressure on the victims, who were accused of betraying one of the best universities in Latin America, while perpetrators were barely punished and directors of the faculties refused to participate or try to block the CPI to happen.

It was a very serious situation that required that urgent action be taken in order to change the structures that allowed these events to occur. The brave initiative of those female students and groups, who broke the silence maintained by fear, should be supported, and some feminist groups did search for a few female professors to ask for organized support.

On April 18, 2015, a few professors facing the impossibility of formal institutional ways of changing the situation sent a message to their personal contacts requesting for a meeting to discuss the issue and to start a self-led mobilization, seeing how the

institutional mechanisms in place had proven to be extremely limited and distressing. The message started by relating to the situation, emphasizing that the problem was not exclusive to the school of medicine or to USP. It read:

“Our proposal is for a large group of female researchers and professor from this university to visibly organize themselves to defend and protect these students. We want them to feel supported and cared for, protected by us. We want them to know that we will be vigilant towards discrimination and threats against their basic rights to quality of education, physical integrity, dignity and non-discrimination.

Our personal experience as women shows us that if this case continues to go unpunished, those who naturalize violence or blame the victim will be given the green light to continue violating, something that many of us women over the last few decades have been fighting to eliminate from our daily lives. At this crucial moment in time we believe that silence means consent!”

First meeting of professors from USP, that took place in April 23th at Medicine School, São Paulo.



A meeting was held on the evening of April 23rd with more than 90 female professors from all units of USP, together in a self-led movement and we formed the Rede Não Cala!

(Network Don't Stay Silent). Finding out about these acts of violence that had been going on at the university brought a lot of pain and outrage. Once again, we were faced with what Marilena Chauí (2001) had said "our university is an integral and inherent part of the authoritative social fabric that characterizes Brazilian society." (Chauí, M, 2001)

There was something else that caught our attention, not only were these acts being committed but the institution which we were a part of had addressed them very unsatisfactorily, if not carelessly. The urgent need for us to get together and find a way to stop the instances of sexual and gender violence, to help students, to listen to them, to help point them towards getting the care they need and protecting their rights became obvious from how quickly the large number of professors and researchers from different areas who, up until that time, did not know each other, were able to mobilize themselves.

Initially, the name of the network was Rede Quem Cala Consente, (that could be translated as Network Silence Means Consent) an expression used during the dictatorship in Brazil to encourage people to speak up. However, the students and fellow professors expressed that in situations of sexual and gender violence silence does not always mean consent. What exists is an impossibility to speak up, a kind of forced silence. So, we changed the name to Rede Não Cala! (Network Don't Stay Silent) which is also an interjection to encourage people to speak up about violence, to not feel like they are alone, and is also a declaration of the students and professors' stance to not remain silent in the face of violence at the university.

Another item we discussed was the makeup of the network. Should male professors and female post-graduates participate? We decided to start by building a network of only female professors and researchers because we believe asserting our presence while defending the female students is important, and it also gives us more political weight. Although students are not part of the Network Don't Stay Silent some of our initiatives were developed in collaboration with USP students and various feminist collectives at the University, some of which congregate female students and professors.

Forms and organizations in the movement



Logotype of the Network Don't stay Silent

The network is comprised of female, mostly middle-aged and white women, across different institutes and faculties at the University of São Paulo, as there are only a few black professors in USP. Women who have graduated in the exact sciences, biological sciences, human sciences and social sciences form part of the network. This diversity has been very important towards building a plural view of our agendas. Some of the professors work in areas that address issues of violence; this is why we rely on specialists in gender relations, health, education, law, and human and social sciences. Our actions are based on the transdisciplinary perspective which we find ourselves in and we are aware of how important it is to further our reading, concepts, and reflections.

The Rede Não Cala is an across-the-board network, and the criteria for becoming part of the network was having an interest and being available. All decisions are made collectively—some are made by the coordination (the group supports this autonomy) and many others are made in meetings or online lists. After the decisions the tasks are divided and performed according to the availability and interests of the professors. There is no funding and no payouts. When we need funding the professors split the costs of the initiatives among them. While the coordination group declares itself feminist, it is a women organized group and do not require all members to do the same. We also embrace professors with different theoretical and practical “feminisms” in the group, having in common the fight against gender and sexual violence.

Our meetings and gatherings are based on rhizomatic form of organization,⁷ which allows for feelings of comradeship [sorority] and friendship to develop, to feel like we are not alone. The courage that students show in talking about a culture of violence reminds us of the images, physical sensations, words, phrases and facial expressions associated with situations of humiliation, disbelief, oppression or invisibility, and the considerable effort many of us had to have to survive through university. We also face perplexity: the students report sometimes named as violence, experiences that were in our opinion trivial in nature. Why did we not face so much violence during our under-graduate days? It seems we may have had different boundaries and definitions of violence 20-30 years ago.

The issue of sexual violence and gender inequalities had an impact on us, but not only because it affects our students or other women. Of course, this was the basis on which we founded the network, and we have an ethical responsibility to those involved, but aside from this, the pain we listened to and dealt with resonated with us. Some of our students' suffering had a direct effect on us. The cross-generation exchanges allowed us to better understand situations of violence, including those that female professors had experienced and continue to experience throughout their professional lives.

We needed to position ourselves in a field of pressing for issues that needed to be addressed, which demanded the intellectual strength to build intervention strategies. Our commitment to the network revealed to us that the institutional environment is one that is insensitive towards sexual and gender violence, and to the silencing and subjugation of women (or of feminine bodies – some of them from male students as well).

As soon as we started dealing with cases of sexual violence we began to listen to phrases like: "rape is a question of power" and, in some departments at USP, it appeared that rape was used to warn women not to try and enter spaces that up until that time had been

⁷ Rhizome is an epistemological model proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to describe theories and structures that allows non-hierarchical entry and exit points. Any element on a rhizome can be connected to any other. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1995)

exclusively masculine. In order to reshape the issue, we needed to create new modes of existence: thinking in other ways is inseparable from feeling and doing differently (Foucault, 2004a). Based on this understanding, the network has concentrated on three stages of work:

- ✓ *Giving support and advice* to people suffering from violence;
- ✓ *Providing educative actions*;
- ✓ *Contributing towards improving administrative mechanisms for investigative protocol.*

One of the more important aspects of our work has been our support. We have created a list of the professors who participate in the network from different departments at USP. In this way male, female and trans students can recognize who we are and, if they want, can come and talk to us.

We provide support and information on legal procedures. We do not process charges; we only provide guidance on possible actions they can take. There are two ways to report violence within the university. A report can be brought to the Human Rights Commission or to the Faculty Management. This report can result in an internal investigation – it is the faculty director who decides this – and then move to an internal process. Both parties speak their case and then a decision is suggested for the institution or faculty management to carry out, which they can choose, or not, to follow.

There is another option available: press charges in the Brazilian court of law. In this case, the person would need to go to a police station to formally press charges, at which point a police investigation would be conducted, and a formal charge could be made through the Public Ministry, resulting in a legal proceeding.

Victims who seek us out for advice are provided with all this information, but our main focus is to listen to them objectively and to give them the strength to seek out further help like psychological, social, pedagogical and legal. A person should be supported even if

they do not wish to press charges, being referred to spaces of psychological and health care or, sometimes, only having a space to express, without judgment or questioning, the aggression suffered. We have seen that some women who do not want to press charges are afraid to seek out help, which only adds to their suffering and isolation. We understand that pressing charges is not easy because it means going public (even though the process is confidential) and reliving the pain. The victim should be supported in whatever decision they decide to make.

In the scope of educative actions we have developed two fronts: spaces for in-person training and for producing material. We put together five courses on support for USP employees: two of these courses were for female professors and researchers, two were for social assistants, and one was for female professors, students, and employees.

The first educative actions have prioritized the empowerment of women, but cultural actions have impacted the academic community as a whole in order to transform the institutional culture regarding gender relations. In this context, we have participated in the classes, in conversation groups, discussions about films and we also printed a leaflet providing information on how to press charges and where to find support. This leaflet was produced by a branch of the Rede Não Cala, on a USP campus in the interior of the state of São Paulo, and was reproduced by the university and then distributed to all its units. In addition, we also produced a brochure which we give out to all new university students and maintain a Facebook page.



Cover of the brochure produced (available at http://sites.usp.br/uspmulheres/wp-content/uploads/sites/145/2017/04/Versão_final.pdf)

We helped produce a report on CRUSP (USP Residential Complex), a housing complex for students who have suffered from many acts of sexual and gender violence. This report

was developed by a committee of students, female professors from Rede Não Cala, a social assistant, employees and the Attorney General providing services for the university. The report presents the weak response on the part of the university when dealing with violence in student accommodations. Only 17 formal charges have been made over the last 10 years from a housing complex that has around 1,800 residents. Only 3 of these charges were actually investigated, and no perpetrator has been punished, showing clearly the difficulty of the University and its representatives to investigate and punish cases of sexual violence.

Together with students from USP, we wrote a proposal for a *Reference Center for people suffering from violence* which focuses on installing a network of services within the university for social support, educational support, and health services.

Our different insertions within the university indicate, how professors and students can raise important questions to USP management, with autonomy and independence, in order to strengthen our common interests and agendas. Nevertheless, these two initiatives (the CRUSP report and the Reference Center project) were not met with the support and enthusiasm that we expected from the university. Despite numerous meetings with USP management in 2017, and the formal proposal for the Center, everything is still just on paper. At this moment, we are preparing a course on gender-related issues targeting the university community. The course brings together our different experiences and research on gender issues, such as gender concept, gender and sexuality, gender and violence, intersectionality and gender relations at the university today. This initiative aims to reach men as well, since the Rede understands that the fight against violence includes education to change the culture that promotes violence.

The Rede has also established strategic partnerships for addressing gender violence, especially with the USP Women's Office, created in 2016 and directly connected to the university central administration, resulting from the USP's inclusion in the UN's HeForShe campaign. There are various levels to this partnership, especially in the collaboration towards building administrative norms and procedures that cover gender violence, an issue we look for at the University Council, since it is not currently included

in any visible university norm. Our partnership also helps produce educative material like the leaflet we wrote which was adopted by the USP Women's Office, as well as encouraging and empowering human rights commissions within the faculties.

Despite their dialogues and partnerships towards fighting violence, the USP Women's Office and the Rede Não Cala! work independently from one another. The Office is an initiative which is directly linked to the rectorate and the Rede is a social movement established by female professors and researchers who work at the university.

Chart: Summary of Rede Não Cala! actions

Action Plans	Main Activities Developed
Support and guidance for people suffering from violence.	Individual support Training on how to provide support Develop a proposal with students for a Reference Center to attend to people suffering from violence
Communication and education actions	Leaflet Brochure Rede's Buttons In-person activities (participation in classes, lectures, and debates) Course on gender and DH for all university students Demonstrations – International Women's Day
Contribute towards improving administrative mechanisms for investigative protocol.	Hold a seminar on Human Rights committees for USP departments Participate in the USP Norms and Regulations Committee CRUSP Report

In addition to these initiatives, Rede Não Cala! has participated in manifestations (8 of March and others), put on public protests against the violation of rights, as the murder of council woman Marielle Franco (2018) in Rio de Janeiro, military police violence against USP employees (2017), and a seminar in support of keeping one of the university daycare units open (its closure was authorized by the rectorate).



March, 8th, 2016 – Women's Day at USP

Sexual and gender violence

It is also important for us to describe in this paper how social inequalities function in terms of gender building. Through our work at the Rede, we have noticed there is a moral judgment occurring on the part of the university when it comes to women's behavior, and naturalization of the male "predatory" sexual behavior. We saw that the university's officials and institutional procedures follow hegemonic constructions about sexuality and

gender – for which there is a wide inequality between genders. In other words, we noticed that most of the academic staff at the university saw the women in these cases as lacking in morals. What was alluded to by the institutional bodies was that if women went to parties and consumed alcohol, they were certainly not women who “respected themselves”.⁸

The public university operates in a similar fashion to the courts in Brazil; it evaluates cases of violence between couples based on certain gender patterns. Mariza Correa (1983) showed that legal proceedings for homicides among couples usually assessed the sexual and moral behavior of the parties involved (victims and defendants) and not so much the crime (homicide or attempted homicide) itself. What is at stake here is a stereotypical way of seeing both victim and aggressor. Usually, male and female professors who are members of commissions formed to investigate cases of sexual assault, pay close attention to the grades of the person accused of violence. And if the grades are good, this can be enough reason for not believing the accusation. The girls, on the other hand, tend to be discredited if it is reported that they were assaulted after drinking. As if an aggression could only be considered credible if it involved male students with low grades and “well behaved” female students, this is a traditional and sexist interpretation.

At USP, directors (not only males) from some campuses where charges of rape were not investigated (meaning there was no internal investigation and the case was not even looked at), discouraged the victims from pressing charges or did not believe their story. The same thing happens with sexual violence cases in police precincts across the country (Vieira, 2011; Lins, 2014) or in courts (Ardailon and Debert, 1987; Pimentel et al., 1998). This probably occurs because they do not take the case very seriously – they don't recognize that it is violence if the women were not physically abused. Or, maybe, they could not believe that a student could commit such an act. They might have seen the

⁸ A senior retired male professor has asked a professor who was part of the network if the victims “respected themselves”.

situation as “sex” and not rape. This has always been the defendants’ excuse – that it was just sex because the women had consented to it.

This insensitivity exhibited by the institution and its representatives in response to the violence and trauma related by the students reveals conflicts in terms of gender construction and proper behaviour for men and women, or gender standards (Butler, 2003; 2004). In some cultural contexts, there is also a naturalization of the male sexual impulse which is described as “uncontrollable”, it is “natural” for a young man, especially when intoxicated, to not want to miss any opportunity to have sex with a partner.

Listening to the young women’s point of view led us to demand that the university recognize these cases of sexual violence; in other words, the cases in which we believe no consent had been given. By listening to the narratives – some from the victims themselves, others from third-parties, others still from papers or university documents – and supporting the students, professors were able to identify with their suffering, and being feminists, we understood that what they were demanding was fair. The moral assessment did not take the sexual rights of our female students into consideration, and certainly does not understand the sexual and reproductive rights of university students in general. There were also gay students who had been victims of violence, and their lack of support was similar.

Considering Vigarello’s (1998) analysis of a change in sensitivity in the legal classification of rape over the centuries in France, we determined that there is a conflict at USP between different perspectives and understandings of the definition of rape. These different ideas are related to the moral standard of gender and sexuality, just as there are different ideas of what defines consent.

It is important to highlight that other social labels that differentiate like class, race, ethnicity, age, nationality and sexual orientation are mixed within this context, shaping relationships relating to the readings on issues of violence in the institution. LGBTQI and other ethnic groups have also come together to bring some of these issues to light. Sexual and gender violence against black women, heterosexual men, gays, lesbians, and

transsexuals is also an issue that goes almost unnoticed.

Our progress, thus far, has demonstrated the importance of denaturalizing both violence and inequalities of gender, and of questioning the institutions' responses. What still needs to be done is strengthen these paths and move towards intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2004; Davis, 2016).

Final Considerations

Donna Haraway (2009) says that partial, identifiable, critical fights, and knowledge are real alternatives to authoritarianism and violence; they both work towards building networks for creating solidarity in the political field and stimulate shared discussions of knowledge. As a result, we did not write this article from a neutral science point of view, we wrote it from the perspective of situated knowledges (Haraway, 2009). We are a group of feminist and activist professors, and we understand the demands that students have and their points of view. Therefore, one can think of our activity as demanding recognition (Honneth, 2003, Fraser, 1996) and respect for human rights (including sexual) of all our students, both male and female.

In our journey of three years, we have accomplished much, but there is so much more to do. Understanding the institutional mechanisms of silencing and the reproduction of unequal relationships of gender and gender violence within the university requires; investigative measures, teaching practices, changes of institutional culture and support to victims, not to mention, making perpetrators accountable. We were able to shed light on this phenomenon thanks to the students' courage and determination. We work towards making sure that the rectorate urges all the departments at USP to install Human Rights Committees, and in doing so, establish new fields of discussion and open up new possibilities for addressing violence. Yet the crimes continue to occur. Even with more visibility, the institutional response is still fairly insecure. Professors in higher positions and central administration, still, sometimes play down the facts. They too need training in gender and human rights. The female students continue to mistrust institutional

responses, and sometimes choose to speak out on social networks, refusing to press formal charges. This has often led to legal proceedings against these same women with little ability to resolve the issue. Making the perpetrators accountable continues to be a huge problem. Guaranteeing the right to confidentiality, or the right of defense of the accused, is sometimes not understood as being a fundamental aspect of a university in order to guarantee interpersonal relationship ethics and respect for human rights.

In this regard, we can say that the network is part of a fight for recognition (Honneth, 2003) of sexual rights – the visibility of cases generated a process in which other people from the community came together after listening to the victims' narratives. This occurred either because they have identified with situations of violence in their own lives or because they understand the legitimate need for rights. We saw that the university's formal structures did not recognize the problem, and teaching staff and administration management employees did not understand the idea of victims' rights, nor did they understand the issues of gender violence. So, by demonstrating and proving these cases exist – whether inside USP or with the press – we were able to build a public issue of rights that were previously invisible. Our work adds to other works developed in a number of universities which have also been mobilized towards fighting gender violence. Our work hopes to encourage other spaces and is also encouraged by them. There is still much to do, but we have produced a movement (in both meanings of the word – social and institutional) that mobilizes small daily revolutions, (Foucault, 2004b) within which are glimpses of the ethics and aesthetics (Foucault, 2004 c) of handling issues of violence. Now, more than ever it is the time to unite efforts and face the extreme inequality and injustice that prevails in our country and to fight against all types of violence and all forms of oppression, particularly those maintained in institutional structures.

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