On Thursday, June 2, Project Humanities held its fourth Podcast Club online event about why police throw away rape kits. The discussion was co-facilitated by Rachel Sondgeroth, Program Coordinator with ASU Project Humanities, and Samantha Hill, an alum of the ASU Psychology and Global Studies programs. They both have done extensive student engagement work in sexual violence prevention. Specifically, Hill worked at the ASU Sexual Violence Prevention program as a peer educator.

This event definitely sparked one of the more impactful discussions for a few reasons. Given the current climate of the United States, criticizing the police force (Can this be said differently?) is essential to the growth of the nation. Also, unfortunately but truly, sexual assault is extremely common all over the world. According to RAINN (what group is this?), every 73 seconds, one American is assaulted. That is an absurdly large number and is not even taking into account the rest of the world.

Sondgeroth started off by mentioning that in the first place, sexual assault “reporting is low. Out of 1000 rapes, only 230 are reported.” That means that 770 rapes go without any sort of investigation because they aren’t reported. Once a rape is reported, the podcast went into depth about the invasive process of retrieving the rape kit. Rachel and Samantha then posed the question, “Why do police departments throw out rape kits?” (the podcast that generated this discussion). Before they could answer, I was able to predict a possible answer based on knowledge about the society we live in and past discussions: money. Frankly, a great deal of the world’s problems have been covered up by money, but the money seems to only benefit certain people. Say more here.

According to the podcast (please site the specif podcast), police have been throwing away rape kits because it testing them (wording?) costs “too much money.” Samantha states, “It’s really invalidating to survivors of sexual assault when people called in and said it costs too much money.” Society seems to prioritize the usage of money for certain people, (vague) and that sexual assault survivors are just not at the top of the list. Rachel then explained that “A lot of people who have DNA evidence are not prosecuted because they [the rape kits] are thrown away.” Hypothetically, this means that if society put more money into testing these kits, chances are that we would have a safer society and a lower rate of sexual assaults. {say more}
This discussion was far more of a listening experience for me rather than a contributing one. However, it is still frustrating to see people, like the police, diminish the experiences of survivors because they do not act the “expected way.” (Explain) Similar to what Rachel said, “People react in different ways, some people freeze,” Samantha added, “Some people disassociate and become more stoic. People have different coping mechanisms and different ways of surviving their experience.” It is important to listen to those who have survived and not judge them based on false pretenses created by society. (like what?)

Another frustrating aspect of the podcast was when the lieutenant emphasized that men aren’t sexually assaulted very often. This enforces rape culture stereotypes, pushing men towards this idea that they are supposed to be the “stong and aggressive” ones, and are unable to be vulnerable in any situations. I also found it odd the podcast didn’t spend any time talking about sexual assault on transgender people when 1 in 2 transgender individuals expereice sexual assult in their life (many in police custody).

Throughout the podcast and discussion, I did my best to understand the situations of people having conversations. I tried to understand why the police are throwing out rape kits and why that may have been their only option. However, in the end, a person’s experience when it comes to sexual assault is far more valuable that the so-called “budget” allocated to police deperatments. Investigating a rape case could possiblhy lead to the safety of many people in the future, prevently further cases, but this cannot be done if police are throwing rape kits.