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“Senior Salute” Sex-Assault Victim Sues Elite School That Fostered Tradition

Concord, N.H. (June 1, 2016): Today, a six-count civil lawsuit styled as *Jane Doe, et al. v. St Paul’s School* (D.N.H. Civil Case No. 16-cv-225) was filed by against The St. Paul’s School, an elite New Hampshire boarding institution, by the parents of a girl who was sexually assaulted two years ago as a freshman. In the lawsuit, the family alleges that her assault resulted from the school’s failure to stop the “Senior Salute,” a competition among male seniors to have the most sexual encounters with underage girls in the months prior to graduation.

The investigation leading up to the lawsuit uncovered a reckless and hypersexualized campus culture at St. Paul’s in which college-bound men openly treated underage girls as objects to be ranked and “scored” in a contest of sexual conquest.

The perpetrator of the assault, Owen Labrie was a known member of a team of Senior Salute competitors called the “Slaymakers.” The Slaymakers ritualized the Senior Salute by sharing lists of potential targets, passing down keys to secluded venues for sex on campus, and setting out to “slay” — sexually exploit — as many underage girls as possible.

Although the highest level of administrators knew about the predatory Senior Salute tradition and the appalling treatment of female students, the complaint alleges, the leadership and faculty did nothing to stop them — accepting this atmosphere as part of the school’s character and fearing backlash from influential parents if efforts were made to change.

The complaint details compelling evidence of this awareness even at the top level of the school’s leadership, citing articles in the student newspaper about the Senior Salute and noting that the rector’s own wife was brazenly invited to participate in it. The lawsuit also describes unconscionable hazing of the victim by members of the St. Paul’s community after she reported the crime, and the school administration’s failure to protect her from such retaliation, bullying, and harassment — causing her to withdraw from the school.

“St. Paul’s fostered a culture of misogyny and male privilege that deprived its female students of the safe and healthy educational environment they would expect from one of the nation’s premier private schools,” said lead counsel Steve Kelly of the Baltimore law firm Silverman|Thompson|Slutkin|White. “Administrators ignored the health, safety and welfare of the children entrusted to their care, and turned their favorite motto on its head—rather than ‘freedom with responsibility,’ administrators held themselves and the students to the standard ‘freedom from responsibility.’”

In addition to Mr. Kelly, Steven Silverman and Stephen Grygiel of Silverman|Thompson|Slutkin|White represent the plaintiff and her family, who are proceeding

under pseudonyms to prevent further retaliation and victimization by the St. Paul's community. Charles G. Douglas III, a former justice on the New Hampshire Supreme Court, and his firm of Douglas, Leonard & Garvey are also serving as local counsel in the case.

Please direct all inquiries for further information to Mr. Kelly at skelly@mdattorney.com or 1-800-385-2243.

Steven J. Kelly is a partner in the law firm of Silverman|Thompson|Slutkin|White, LLC. He is a nationally recognized advocate for crime victims in both criminal and civil litigation. As counsel for families of sexually exploited children, he has represented their interests on a U.S. Department of Justice task force and in authoring training courses for the National Crime Victim Law Institute.

Maryland-based law firm Silverman|Thompson|Slutkin|White, rated "AV" by Martindale-Hubbell and recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as a "Best Law Firm," is widely regarded as one of the premier litigation firms in the mid-Atlantic region. The firm has achieved extraordinary success for its clients across Maryland, the District of Columbia, and the United States. For more information, please visit www.mdattorney.com.