

Phillips Exeter Minister Told Sexual Abuser to Deliver Bread as Punishment



Summary: A female student told the Boston Globe that after being groped on campus a school minister told her abuser to deliver bread as a punishment.

Teen Michaella Henry told the Boston Globe that after she reported being groped by a star athlete at Phillips Exeter, the school minister's idea of punishment was to have her abuser deliver bread.

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Henry, 17, recalled that Chukwudi "Chudi" Ikpeazu slipped his hands inside her shirt and squeezed her body even though she said "no" repeatedly. The encounter happened in the basement of Phillips Church on the Exeter campus in October, and Henry said that she suffered panic attacks and had a hard time sleeping after the groping.

Henry told the school's minister Reverend Robert Thompson about the sexual assault instead of going to the police, and the minister suggested that the two meet and work out their differences. Henry said that Ikpeazu took responsibility for his actions, and the minister suggested that as an "act of penance" the athlete was to *bake bread and deliver it* to his victim for one year.

But the bread punishment became torture for Henry, who said seeing her abuser thrive on campus as a star athlete and leader and seeing him on a consistent basis stressed her out. Ikpeazu seemed to resent the punishment too—so he stopped delivering.

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Henry then went to school officials for help; and Melissa Mischke, dean of students, told Henry's mother that the punishment was a bad idea.

"This actually was more harmful than good since it caused Chudi and Michaella to intersect on campus more regularly than necessary and did not really serve to rebuild anything. Dean Cosgrove and I were disappointed to learn of this arrangement," Mischke said in an email.

But sympathy seemed to be the most Henry could get out of the officials, and eventually, she had enough. Weeks before her graduation in June, she went to the police, and Ikpeazu is now facing arraignment in August for misdemeanor sexual assault. Police are now investigating the school and how it handled Henry's case as well as other instances of sexual impropriety by students and faculty.

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According to a police official, Phillips Exeter told no third parties about Ikpeazu's groping of Henry nor did they call the athlete's mother. They also did not contact Henry's family about the incident, nor did they inform Henry's family that she was not the first person to accuse Ikpeazu of sexual impropriety. The school stated that since there was no penetration they were not required to report the matter to police.

"It's ridiculous that a student follows the rules, makes a report of sexual assault to the school, and is then rebuffed and demeaned and subjected to institutional bullying," said Michael Whitfield Jones, an Exeter graduate who is helping Henry.

This is not the first time Phillips Exeter has been accused of covering up sexual scandals. The Boston Globe said that the elite school was criticized for not disclosing a popular teacher's sexual relations with two students, amongst other instances; and in August, an Exeter alumnus published a column on Jezebel that criticized the private school for turning a blind eye to sexual assault on campus. The school responded by telling parents that it was committed to addressing issues pertaining to sexual assault.

Thompson and other school officials declined to comment on Henry's case.

What do you think about Phillips Exeter's treatment of Michaella Henry and of Chudi Ikpeazu's original punishment? Let us know in the comments below.

Source: [The Boston Globe](#)

