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Alleged gang rape at Cornell turns spotlight on campus sexual assault

UPDATED SEP 30, 2026

By Brittany Shammas,  Lauren Mascarenhas,  Taylor Galgano

The Chi Phi fraternity house at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, on September 28, 2026. ...



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The complaint was explosive, claiming that seven members of a Cornell University fraternity took part in the sexual assault of a 20-year-old sorority member during a drug-fueled, hours-long encounter in the fall of 2024. Included in the filing was a screenshot of a Snapchat message where one of the men wrote that there was “free p*ssy” and others responded gleefully, with comments like “CHI PHIII.”

Soon after the lawsuit’s filing on Sept. 16, a familiar pattern played out. Furious onlookers took to social media to demand accountability, flooded the district attorney’s office with complaints and shared photos and other identifying details of the fraternity members many have taken to calling “the Cornell 7.” Others, meanwhile, condemned the rush to judgment or urged caution in drawing conclusions from the allegations in the lawsuit, which a prosecutor said differ from what the alleged victim reported in 2024. Some hurried to try to unmask the anonymous woman behind the accusations.

There were flashes of politics and victim blaming, judgment and shame in a case that’s rife with unanswered questions and likely to evolve as more details come to light.

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Cornell students voice concerns as fraternity rape allegations roil campus

4:58

The issue of sexual assault on campus – and how allegations should be handled – has resurfaced again and again. An individual case grabs the attention of the nation and sets off a debate over where we are as a country and whether change is needed: Columbia University student Emma Sulkowicz carrying a mattress to protest how her report was handled; Chanel Miller delivering a fiery victim impact statement at the sentencing of a former Stanford University swimmer convicted of assaulting her; Summer Willis crawling to the Texas state capitol on her hands and knees to secure a change to the legal loophole that allowed her assault to go unprosecuted.

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AOC calls out Cornell
University over alleged ...

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Sasha Pieterse, an actress known for her starring role in the hit show “Pretty Little Liars,” told CNN she herself is a survivor of sexual assault. It’s something she has not publicly spoken about until now.

Pieterse said she does not think people “understand the gravity of what happens around the aftermath: the fear, the shame, the level of physical and mental recovery.”

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She said she hopes the spotlight on the Cornell allegations will help other victims feel less alone and show why consent laws should be standardized.

“I never want anything like what just happened at Cornell to happen to any other person,” Pieterse said.

Laura L. Dunn, a victims’ rights attorney with a specialization in campus assault cases, heard about the Cornell case almost immediately after the complaint was filed. People across her life sent it to her, reminded not only of her efforts to address the issue but also of her own personal connection to it: As a student athlete on the University of Wisconsin at Madison’s crew team in 2004, she reported being assaulted by two male teammates. No charges were filed.

“It’s a very painful moment in time, on many levels, to see a case that I could have read about 20 years ago happening again,” said Dunn, 41.

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Attorneys for two of the seven alleged assailants at Cornell have denied the allegations and some observers have argued that what happened that night in 2024 did not qualify as a crime under New York law – a comment that has also been made by Tompkins County District Attorney Matthew Van Houten in defending his decision not to file criminal charges when the incident was reported. He said the alleged victim at the time described “her participation in drug use and sexual conduct as voluntary, conscious and consensual.”

One on one with District Attorney Van Houten Cornell rape investigation

10:37

Van Houten said this week he will reopen the case, adding that he recognizes “the reality that it can take years of therapy and healing for victims of sexual assaults to fully process and understand what happened to them.”

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Research has found that false allegations are rare, estimated to represent 2 to 10 percent of reports, according to one analysis.

A shifting playbook

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Stanford students wear a 1/3 sign on their caps to show solidarity for a Stanford rape victim during graduation ceremonies at Stanford University, in Palo Alto, California, on June 12, 2016. *(Gabrielle Lurie/AFP/Getty Images)*

After her own assault, Dunn vowed to push for change – and felt in the 2010s that major progress was being made. A high point for her came in 2011, when the Obama administration reminded higher education institutions of their obligation under Title IX to address sexual violence and directed them to step up their investigations into reports.

Colleges and universities responded, she said, by doing more meaningful educational efforts and boosting their Title IX offices.

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“There were all these efforts during that era to really turn the tide,” Dunn said.

More people began speaking out, and by 2014 several high-profile incidents – including Emma Sulkowicz’s – held the public’s interest and drove a desire for change. At the same time, some critics worried that the Obama-era guidance had gone too far, tasking college bureaucrats with investigating criminal allegations and diluting due process.

The first Trump administration withdrew it in 2017, citing concerns about due process. Title IX protections were expanded again under rules set by the Biden administration’s Department of Education, which survivor advocates said removed some of the barriers faced by victims of sexual assault. Those changes were again undone this week by Trump officials.

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The move cements a change the Trump administration had informally enacted last year to the federal law banning discrimination based on sex and governs how schools respond to complaints of sexual misconduct. The 2020 guidance narrowed the definition of sexual harassment, extended protections for students accused of sexual misconduct and added requirements like live hearings with the potential for cross-examination.

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Emma Grasso Levine, a grad student and senior manager of Title IX policy and programs at Advocates for Youth, told CNN the move “sends a message that it’s not safe to speak out.”

Activists say recent years have seen a backlash to the Me Too movement, coupled with the rise of the “manosphere,” both of which have contributed to the climate around sexual assault on college campuses. National Organization for Women president Kim Villanueva described the content as often promoting women as objects and encouraging or glorifying rape culture.

Her team has been having conversations with college students about the Cornell investigation and the meaning of consent. She said it’s important to have conversations with young men about consent and how they view women in society.

“It will involve a lot of social change,” Villanueva said.

College campuses today

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Cornell University Police vehicles on campus in Ithaca, New York, on September 29, 2026. *(Lauren Petracca/Reuters)*

Saanya Agarwal was a sophomore at Cornell in 2024 when the university sent an alert about a reported sexual assault on campus. She remembers it mentioned several men allegedly being involved but that it was otherwise scarce on details – something she found unnerving as a female student sharing a campus with them.

Now a senior, she told CNN that her anger at what she considered a lack of transparency fueled her run for a student assembly position representing women. She was elected and spent last year talking to university administrators and Greek life representatives to try to advocate for more transparency.

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“I think if you talk to people, especially women on campus, this question is always in the back of your head: What if that was me?” said Agarwal, who is a sorority member.

Reyes Almeida, a junior at Boston University, said the Cornell incident is appalling, but didn’t surprise her because of how “pervasive” sexual assault is on college campuses.

Cornell students at forefront of covering alleged gang rape speak out

3:32

Almeida is president of BU’s chapter of ‘It’s On Us,’ an organization that supports sexual assault survivors on college campuses and tries to prevent assaults from happening through intervention training.

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Many of the survivors their organization works with have chosen not to report their sexual assault to the university, Almeida said. CNN has reached out to BU about survivors choosing not to report assault.

Her opinion is that some universities prioritize image over safety. “The only thing they want to do is keep their pristine image,” Almeida said.

At Rowan University, like others around the country, students receive notification when there is a reported sexual assault on campus in compliance with the federal Clery Act.

Tamyah Crafton, a college senior who founded Rowan University’s chapter of the National Council of Negro Women, appreciates these notifications, but wants more information surrounding them and town hall meetings to discuss the details.

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At Cornell, administrators barred Chi Phi from campus and launched a task force on sexual assault, which issued recommendations earlier this year.

But Agarwal, the Cornell student, said the perceived lack of transparency from Cornell leaves students to wonder about exactly what happened – and whether someone involved might be sitting next to them in class or across from them at the local bar.

“There’s so much distrust and that also creates fear, understandably so, because we don’t know what’s going on,” she said.

CNN’s Jason Carroll and Linh Tran contributed to this report.



Up next



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District attorney reopens case of alleged Cornell University 'gang rape'

A student alleged that seven fraternity members sexually assaulted her in 2024.



District attorney reopens case of alleged Cornell University 'gang rape'

By [Peter Charalambous](#), [Olivia Rubin](#), [Courtney Wilson](#), and [Aaron Katersky](#)

September 29, 2026, 4:45 PM

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Editor's note: This story contains graphic descriptions taken from the alleged victim's initial statement to police.

Prosecutors in central New York say they are reopening the investigation of an alleged "gang rape" at a Cornell University fraternity in 2024 after a civil lawsuit filed earlier this month sparked outrage about the incident.

Tompkins County District Attorney Matthew Van Houten said in a statement that his office is considering whether to bring criminal charges related to the incident, though he said the allegations in the civil complaint are "dramatically different" than the woman's statement to police two years ago.

"It's our intention to present the case to the Tompkins County grand jury with Jane Doe's cooperation," Van Houten told ABC News. "We want to reexamine whether there's additional evidence that we were not aware of in November of 2024, that exists now

that would change our assessment of the case and would result in the grand jury finding that there was criminal conduct."

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The reopening of the case comes less than two weeks after a former Cornell student filed a civil lawsuit alleging that she was drugged, assaulted and gang raped by seven former and current members of the Chi Phi fraternity at Cornell.

Cornell's Chi Phi chapter was barred from campus after the alleged Oct. 19, 2024, incident, though none of the individuals allegedly involved faced criminal charges, according to the DA. Van Houten said his office did not bring charges in 2024 because the woman's statement to authorities did not allege she was drugged without her knowledge or that she did not consent to engage in sexual activities.



USA, New York, Finger Lakes Region, Ithaca, Cornell University, elevated view of McFadden Hall, summer
Walter Bibikow/Getty Images

"She never says that she was drugged without her knowledge. She admits to taking drugs and alcohol voluntarily and with knowledge. She does not allege that she was forced to engage in any acts. She does not say that she was physically helpless or unconscious or incapacitated at any point during the time at the fraternity house," Van Houten said.

Van Houten said that he considered Jane Doe, the alleged victim, credible. He also said neither Jane Doe nor her attorneys ever contacted his office to ask for reconsideration of her case or to suggest that her sworn statement was inaccurate.

Jane Doe's attorney faults police investigation

Thomas P. Giuffra, attorney for Jane Doe, the alleged victim, disputed Van Houten's description of the woman's initial statement to the Cornell University Police Department and faulted authorities for never following up with his client.

"In my experience, speaking with an abuse survivor requires delicacy, understanding and specialized training. An average University Police officer would not have these skills. It would be the role of a specially trained detective or district attorney. However, Ms. Doe was never contacted by anybody with those skills," he said.

Prosecutor releases summary of Jane Doe's initial statement

Van Houten on Monday released certain information taken from Jane Doe's sworn initial statement to Cornell police officers to explain his office's decision not to seek criminal charges in the case.

"While I generally refrain from commenting publicly on criminal investigations, the community outrage stemming from the incomplete news and social media coverage requires that I provide an answer to why the investigation resulted in a lack of criminal charges," Van Houten said in a statement.

According to a summary of the six-page typewritten statement Van Houten said Jane Doe provided to the Cornell University Police Department in November 2024, Jane Doe told police that she agreed to have a threesome with two Chi Phi fraternity brothers in part "due to how attracted [she] was" to one of them and in part because of her "drunken curiousness."

The statement goes on to say that Jane Doe and the two fraternity brothers then "engaged in a 'threesome'" involving sexual activity. Another man then entered the room and shook her hand, according to the document.

"When [Jane Doe] made contact with [Male Number 3's] hand, [Male Number 3] pulled [Jane Doe] into him and [they] began making out. While [Male Number 3] was kissing [her], [Male Number 2] began groping [her]. Eventually, [Male Number 2, Male Number 3, and Jane Doe] would end up on the bed next to where [Male Number 1] was sleeping and [they] began to have a threesome," the document said.

Other men were also in and out of the room, according to the document.



This photo shows the former Chi Phi fraternity house in Ithaca, where a former Cornell University student alleges that she was drugged and gang-raped in 2024.

ABC News

"Jane Doe had difficulty remembering parts of what happened next. She remembered '[Male Number 7] said something very rude and mean to [her].' Male Number 7 apologized and 'grabbed [her] face and started kissing [her].' Jane Doe 'quickly backed away to stop [Male Number 7] from kissing [her],' according to the document.

The summary then said some of the fraternity brothers began complimenting Jane Doe's looks and asked if they could ingest drugs off of her body.

"While the men were doing drugs off of her body, [Male Number 3] and [another male] entered the room and said something like, 'Ok we're shutting down whatever the [expletive] this is,'" the document said.

"While the behavior of certain Chi Phi fraternity members was without question disgusting and morally reprehensible, the foundation of the criminal justice system is that criminal prosecutions must be based upon evidence and not emotion," Van Houten said.

DA says his office didn't 'independently' investigate the allegations

In an interview with ABC News, Van Houten acknowledged that he relied on the investigation conducted by Cornell Police and said his office didn't "independently investigate" the allegations -- a policy he said was in line with many upstate New York counties.

Van Houten also said that a screenshot of part of a Snapchat group chat included in the complaint -- in which Jane Doe claims members of the fraternity discuss the alleged incident -- was never provided to his office. Giuffra said the messages are a "critical piece of evidence" that were provided to authorities in 2024.

"My client went to the Cornell University Police because a crime was committed. It was the obligation of the police to investigate the complaints. They were given the group chat inviting the members of the fraternity to rape my client," Giuffra said. "This was a critical piece of evidence supporting that a crime had occurred. Despite this there was no follow-up with Ms. Doe either by the Cornell Police or the Tompkins County District Attorney."

ABC News has reached out to the named defendants in the lawsuit, including the seven fraternity members, Cornell University and others.

Cornell said in a Sept. 21 statement that it takes allegations of sexual violence "extremely seriously" and that its Office of Civil Rights and Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards "investigated and adjudicated the allegations consistent with university policies."

The university said federal privacy law prevents it from publicly disclosing specific information about individual students or disciplinary responses. Cornell said violations of university policies could result in sanctions up to and including suspension or expulsion.

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Cornell also said the Xi chapter of Chi Phi "remains barred from our campus."

The university said in a new statement on Monday that it "supports the decision of the Tompkins County District Attorney (DA) to provide an opportunity for the victim's story, in the 2024 Chi Phi fraternity Sexual Assault case, to be heard by a criminal grand jury."

evidence over multiple days. The complainant and respondents had the opportunity to testify and present evidence. At its conclusion, the hearing panel issued a range of sanctions, which included expulsions and suspensions from Cornell. None of the individuals charged were offered the opportunity to write essays as a sole consequence of their involvement."

Jane Doe’s lawyers allege that the fraternity members "were afforded the opportunity to mitigate their conduct by submitting essays to Cornell."

The fraternity was closed in 2024, the school said.

"Any suggestion that the University did not impose consequential punishments for those involved is false," Cornell said on Monday. "A continuation of the false narrative that there were minimal consequences in this case is irresponsible, will make survivors feel less safe and supported, and will perpetuate the underreporting of sexual assault."

An attorney for defendant Scott Kretzschmar denied the allegations and said the incident detailed in the complaint "did not happen."

“At bottom, Scott never sexually assaulted or even touched the plaintiff in any way. Period,” said attorney Jeremy Saland. “We

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Defendant Scott Norris denied engaging in sexual activity or drug use, though he acknowledged that he sent a message that was included in the complaint.

“I did not participate in any sexual activity or drug use. I was not found responsible by Cornell for any of the accusations involving sexual activity and drug use for which others received serious consequences. I thoughtlessly engaged in Snapchat and briefly stopped in the room where misconduct happened but not when it happened,” he said through an attorney.

An attorney for Gillio Lopes denied the allegations against his client, which he said “do not reflect the complete record.”

“Cornell previously investigated this matter and developed an extensive factual record. The allegations now being made publicly differ in significant respects from the accounts provided during that investigation and do not reflect the complete record. Those inconsistencies will be tested through discovery and addressed in the litigation,” said attorney Andrew Miltenberg.

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Cornell assault allegation



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TIMES EXCLUSIVE

How a Cornell Student Went From Shame to Action

The woman known as “Jane Doe” was initially embarrassed about what happened at a fraternity party in 2024, but soon concluded: “I was assaulted.”



Listen · 11:42 min

By Debra Kamin, Matt Flegenheimer, Amy Julia Harris and Sharon Otterman

Oct. 1, 2026

In October 2024, about a week after a Chi Phi fraternity party at Cornell University, the sophomore who would come to be known as Jane Doe was milling around an online forum about Greek life when she encountered a post that stopped her cold.

“Are Chi Phi brothers Crips or Bloods because I hear they have been doing hell Gang Banging?” someone had written.

“They do drugs and gang r*ped a sophomore,” another user said. “Report them.”

Since the evening that began on Oct. 19, 2024, Jane Doe had recounted the night’s events to her roommates without identifying herself as a rape victim. She had exchanged friendly text messages with men she would later accuse of assault. She had heard uncharitable appraisals of herself from undergraduate gossips.

Then she read the words.

“That’s the first time I had ever heard the narrative change that I wasn’t a whore and that I was assaulted,” Jane Doe told investigators, according to documents from a university review of the accusations obtained by The New York Times.

Those records, which have not been previously reported, help illuminate a case that has horrified the nation and plunged one of its elite institutions into crisis. They shed light on the crucial three-week period between the fraternity party and Jane Doe's decision to take her story to the campus police, accusing multiple fraternity brothers of sexual assault and alleging that she was coerced into taking ketamine.

The bare facts of what happened after she made her accusations are by now well known: The Tompkins County, N.Y., district attorney, Matthew Van Houten, reviewed her complaint and declined to bring criminal charges, saying there was not sufficient evidence to do so. Jane Doe filed a complaint that prompted at least a dozen hearings by the school's Title IX committee, which is supposed to ensure compliance with federal civil rights laws.



The Chi Phi fraternity is under scrutiny after a women said that multiple members of the organization sexually assaulted her. Heather Ainsworth for The New York Times

On Sept. 16, Jane Doe also filed a lawsuit against seven men, accusing them of sexual assault. Lawyers for at least three of the accused men have broadly denied criminal wrongdoing; others have not yet made public statements.

What had not been known publicly, until now, were the detailed filings collected during the private Title IX proceedings — hundreds of pages of emails, text messages, photographs and interviews with Jane Doe, her friends and those she accused.

Taken together, the raw materials sketch Jane Doe's journey from an unknown sophomore to the embodiment of another searing national dialogue about sexual assault and consent. (Although Jane Doe is identified in the documents, The Times is withholding her name.)

Some women around her, the documents show, were quick to say they viewed the events of the evening of Oct. 19 as sexual assault. But Jane Doe, the interviews and text messages reveal, first appeared to grapple with shame, humiliation and concerns about her reputation before she began to consider herself an assault victim.

"I don't really remember her ever kind of citing that she had said yes to anything that occurred," one of her roommates had said of the first hours after Jane Doe returned home the morning of Oct. 20, according to the Title IX files, which were compiled as part of the school's formal process for investigating allegations of sexual harassment and assault.

On page upon page, the documents make for difficult reading, vacillating between the merry shorthand of college students — asides about the gym, Snapchat, Greek life — and the blunt-force details of an alleged gang assault that the victim appeared to be processing in real time.

From the beginning, the case has seemed to double as a referendum on so many vexing questions about what it means to be a young woman on a college campus, even a campus as nominally esteemed as Cornell's: Who is believed, and who is coddled? How much good can Title IX do? Has anything changed, really?

For Jane Doe, the records suggest, the first task was to make sense of what had happened to her.

‘A traumatic way’

At 3:05 a.m. on Oct. 20, 2024, one of Jane Doe’s roommates sent her a text.

“Are you coming home tonight?” she asked.

Four minutes later, Jane Doe texted back that she didn’t know.

The roommate went to sleep, she would tell investigators. When she woke up at 11 a.m., she uploaded a photo of her empty room to Snapchat. “Only I made it back home,” she wrote on the post.

Around 11:15 a.m., she said, Jane Doe arrived home, still in her “big boots and small dress” from the night before, according to the roommate. She had consumed ketamine and had sex with multiple men, she told her two roommates. One roommate told investigators that Jane Doe did not use the word “rape” or “assault” yet.

It seemed like she was “in shock,” her other roommate later told investigators, “not really understanding the gravity of what she was saying.”

The next day, on Oct. 21, Jane Doe went to her “big sister” — a woman designated as a mentor — at Cornell’s Tri Delta sorority and told her there were rumors circulating that she was a “slut.” The big sister, a junior at Cornell, told investigators that Jane Doe added with a laugh that “unfortunately they are true.”



The Tri Delta sorority house at Cornell University. Heather Ainsworth for The New York Times

“I could tell that — just from personal experiences — that what she was going through is that she had not yet processed what had happened,” the big sister told investigators.

That same day, Jane Doe received a text message from Jonathan Newell, one of the men she would go on to accuse of sexual assault.

“I just wanted to apologize for how things went down the other night,” Mr. Newell wrote. He then said that both he and Matthew Ingalls, another of the men she would later accuse of assault, both felt terrible for being too under the influence of drugs and alcohol to “shut it down and kick people out before it got way out of hand.”

Jane Doe replied and reassured him.

“At the end of the day non of the sexual stuff was illegal and honestly i really liked being w u and matt,” she wrote.

A lawyer for Mr. Newell did not respond to requests for comment. A lawyer for Mr. Ingalls declined to comment.

The next day, on Oct. 22, Jane Doe made an appointment at Cornell Health to see a doctor because she had contracted a urinary tract infection and wanted to be tested for sexually transmitted diseases. She told the doctor she contracted the U.T.I. “in a traumatic way,” according to a transcript of her conversation with investigators.

“She didn’t really follow up on that,” Jane Doe said of the doctor. “She just suggested I go to therapy.”

‘Say it didn’t happen’

On Oct. 23, Jane Doe texted Mr. Ingalls.

“Bro,” she wrote, “everyone knows.”

She said the episode was “RUINING my life temporarily” and that her reputation had been destroyed. She said all she could do was “sleep and cry all day.”

According to the documents, Mr. Ingalls assured her that it would all blow over soon, noting “how fast nonsense spreads at this school,” and said she did not have “anything to be ashamed of.”

“You’re right,” Jane Doe wrote. “It’ll get better.”

Jane Doe’s sorority big sister received a text that week: “Have you heard the rumor about your little?”

In the meantime, Jane Doe had delivered strict instructions to one of her roommates: “If anyone asks about this,” she said, according to the roommate’s testimony, “say it didn’t happen.”

The roommate was plainly concerned. Initially, she said, Jane Doe was “kind of recounting it as this sort of crazy thing that she had done.”

“As the days went on,” the roommate continued, “I think she kind of came to realize that it was something bad. And that she didn’t really enjoy her time there.”

On Oct. 25, Mr. Ingalls texted Jane Doe: “U good?”

Jane Doe replied that Mr. Newell had “def told people.”

Days later, she sent Mr. Ingalls an image of the forum post accusing Chi Phi of gang rape.

“???” she wrote.

“Ridiculous,” Mr. Ingalls wrote. “I’m gonna report that.”

Uninvited from the party



Chi Phi shut down in 2024 and remains barred from campus, according to Cornell. Heather Ainsworth for The New York Times

As Halloween approached, Jane Doe’s roommates told investigators, her understanding of what had happened to her appeared to have shifted.

Around Oct. 28, Mr. Ingalls was on the phone with Jane Doe and, according to one of her roommates who said she overheard the conversation, he apologized to her. But rather than assure him everything was OK, Jane Doe took a different tone.

“How could you let this happen?” the roommate recalled her saying.

“I think she wanted it to be consensual,” the roommate told investigators, looking back on how Jane Doe had processed the alleged assault. The roommate told investigators that Jane Doe had been sexually assaulted before, which made it particularly hard for her to talk openly about what had happened.

“I’d have conversations and she would describe a part of what happened and I would tell her that that is what could be classified as rape,” the roommate said.

At Chi Phi, the fraternity was preparing for a Halloween party, and Jane Doe was eager to attend. Text messages included in the investigation show Mr. Ingalls assuring Jane Doe that he and other fraternity members wanted her to be there.

“chi phi is your house and you are welcome here,” he wrote, relaying the views of the fraternity’s president, who was not among those accused of sexual assault.

“thank u i really appreciate that,” Jane Doe responded. “<3 i’ll bring my cigs tomorrow”

But then Jane Doe received a phone call from the fraternity’s president, according to the text messages.

She was disinvited from the party. It was for her own good, he said.

Jane Doe sent a biting text to Mr. Ingalls.

“I knew this was going to happen,” she wrote. “The woman will always get the short end of the stick. Yall aren’t my friends. Yall are covering your asses.”

By Nov. 3, Jane Doe appears to have concluded that she was assaulted at the October party. She sent a text to Mr. Newell.

“let’s be clear that 90% of what happened that night was not consensual. i was given more key than i can remember,” she said, using a shorthand for ketamine, “and i know that i told u i felt uncomfortable and i didn’t know anyone in the room.”

The text continued with her telling him that one of her only memories was doing ketamine off of his penis “in front of everyone like a sex doll/worker.”

Four days later, on Nov. 7, according to the documents, Jane Doe went to an emergency room in Ithaca and requested a rape kit.

Hurubie Meko and Claire Fahy contributed reporting.

Debra Kamin is an investigative reporter for The Times who covers wealth and power in New York.

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A version of this article appears in print on , Section A, Page 1 of the New York edition with the headline: Cornell Student’s Shame Slowly Turned Into Outrage

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NY attorney general reviewing Cornell fraternity alleged gang rape handling

By Isabel Soisson FOX 5 NY Crime and Public Safety Published September 30, 2026 5:53 PM EDT

Ithaca Mayor Pauses Cornell Student Event Permits

Ithaca, NY Mayor Robert Cantelmo has issued a pause on all Cornell student event permits amid recent allegations of a gang rape at the Chi Phi fraternity house two years ago.

The Brief

- The New York Attorney General's Office is reviewing Cornell University's handling of an alleged 2024 gang rape following a civil lawsuit filed by a former student.
- New York Gov. Kathy Hochul called for an investigation into Cornell University's response to the alleged assault on Tuesday.
- The AG's office did not disclose the precise scope of what investigators are examining

what timeline exists for determining next steps.

NEW YORK - The New York Attorney General's Office is reviewing Cornell University's handling of an alleged 2024 gang rape following a civil lawsuit filed a former student, a spokesperson for the office confirmed to **FOX 5 N.Y.**

What we know: The unidentified victim filed the complaint on Sept. 16, claiming she was sexually assaulted at the Chi Phi fraternity house on campus in October 2024.

Her suit says the assault occurred after she was pressured into snorting ketamine, smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol, to the point where she was incapable of consenting to sex.

The woman reported the incident to Cornell's campus police department, but the local district attorney's office opted not to prosecute anyone at the time. It reopened the criminal investigation Monday as public outrage built over the woman's allegations.

Tompkins County District Attorney Matthew Van Houten said his office has begun pursuing criminal charges against the seven alleged perpetrators and will present the case before a grand jury. The victim is suing the men allegedly involved in the reported gang rape, the fraternity, the university, a bar located near campus and others.

Hochul calls for investigation

What they're saying: New York Gov. Kathy Hochul [called for an independent investigation](#) into Cornell University's response on Tuesday following the DA's decision to reopen the case.

"The allegations in this case are nothing short of horrifying," she said. "For any student to come forward after an experience like this takes extraordinary courage. No student should ever be left wondering whether the institutions meant to protect them will listen and act."

Hochul voiced her support for Van Houten's decision to reopen the criminal investigation and called for an outside law firm to be hired to independently review the university's response as well.

DA comments on 2024 investigation

The other side: Van Houten defended his office's actions Tuesday in several media interviews, arguing that while the male students involved did things that were "morally wrong," the woman's initial account to police didn't include allegations that she was drugged, incapacitated beyond the ability to consent or forced into sex. He also defended his office's decision to conduct an additional investigation after the woman initially spoke to police in 2024.

In a statement, Cornell University supported reopening the investigation, emphasizing that an internal 2024 disciplinary panel expelled some students and suspended others, while closing the on-campus Chi Phi chapter.

Denying claims of lenient punishments—such as offering essay writing as a sole consequence—Cornell called such claims false and irresponsible, warning that misrepresenting the sanctions undermines survivor safety and reporting.

Dig deeper: However, a newly surfaced transcript from November 2024 directly challenges the prosecutor's account of the initial police interview.

The Associated Press [reported Wednesday](#) that a newly surfaced transcript from November 2024 shows the victim explicitly telling campus investigators she was entirely certain she had been raped.

According to the document, the woman stated she was rendered completely helpless after being coerced into consuming alcohol and narcotics at the Chi Psi house, while also detailing severe physical violence during the assault.

Tompkins County District Attorney Matthew Van Houten acknowledged to media outlets that he did not review the full interview transcript before opting against criminal charges in 2024, according to the AP. Instead, Van Houten said his office relied on a written statement compiled by a university police officer and signed by the woman, which he previously characterized as comprehensive enough to close the matter without further inquiry.

What we don't know: The New York Attorney General's Office did not disclose the precise scope of what investigators are examining or what timeline exists for determining next steps.

The Source: Information for this report was provided by the New York Attorney General's Office, an emailed statement from New York Gov. Kathy Hochul and The Associated Press, with additional reporting by FOX LOCAL.

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