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CASAR Public lecture: 'How Different Are We? Sexual Harassment Education in the US and Egypt'

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November 19, 2023 at 1 pm
AUC New Campus Waleed Tim Sullivan Lounge
Event Report by Maha Muehlhaeusler

Event Title: How Different Are We? Sexual Harassment Education in the US and Egypt

Summary:

This event was part of a series of events centered around women since November is the United Nations month for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Director of CASAR Professor Mark W. Deets introduced the speaker, Jillian Campana, Professor and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. Campana has given a TEDx talk in Mumbai, Created a film titled *The Puzzle Club*, and written several books including *Western Theatre in Global Contexts: directing and teaching culturally inclusive drama around the world* (Routledge, 2020) and *It's Not My Fault: five new plays on sexual harassment in Egypt*, which she discusses in the context of this CASAR event, this book has also received the Times Higher Education's Arts Humanities and Social Sciences Research Project of the Year for the Middle East - North Africa region. In her talk, Campana compares the nature of sexual harassment education in Egypt and the US by focusing on categories such as policies, training, whether this training is mandatory, and compares reactions to famous cases of sexual harassment in Egyptian universities versus American universities. Through her exploration, she also created three short films that attempt to showcase to Egyptian students what harassment looks like, and how it can be dealt with in different contexts. AUC theater students participated in making these movies, which Campana directed.

Full Report:

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harrasment in Egyptian universities versus American universities. Through her exploration, she also created three short films that attempt to showcase to Egyptian students what harassment looks like, and how it can be dealt with in different contexts. AUC theater students participated in making these movies, which Campana directed.

Campana began by emphasizing activism using the arts. She stated that art is “a power tool” to bring people together. It is through art that she argues, people can make connections and learn to better themselves and their society. This is why she believes that by creating sexual harassment education in the medium of film, more reach is possible. That being said, Campana moves on to discuss what exactly IS sexual harassment. “It is an exertion of power” and every policy against sexual harassment has been a reaction to sexual harassment.

To begin her investigation Campana compares administrative policies towards sexual harassment in Egypt versus the United States. She turns through a timeline for each country, starting with Egypt’s 2014 Penal Code amendment to define and criminalize sexual harassment. Significantly, Campana also emphasizes the importance of the Egyptian revolution in creating anti-harassment policies, as difficult times allow for all problems to arise and for voices to be heard. In 2020 a bill was passed to protect the identities of women who reported sexual crimes, which was a turning point for Egypt as many women were afraid to take that step in their own name. Punishments for anyone who “subjected others [...] to sexual or lewd matters, suggestions or hints” increased in 2021, and most recently the penalty for crimes of sexual violence increased with fines and prison times most recently in 2023.

The timeline discussed for the United States shares similar patterns. In 1964 the Civil Rights Act “outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin.” In 1972, the introduction of the Title IX amendment to the Civil Rights Act “prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex” in educational settings. This Title IX is also available at AUC, as it is an American schooling system. Following this, there was the 1994 the Violence Against Women Act, and in the 2000s it became a requirement for institutions of higher education to provide misconduct prevention training for “students, staff members, and faculty members.”

The similarities between these two countries according to Campana are the fact that policies against harassment were always a response in aftermath of incidents, such as the AUC Ahmed Basem Zaki incident in 2020, where Assault Police was created and women all over EGYPT began to speak up, or the Stanford 2015 frat party incident, where the university invested \$2.7 million of “new and expanded programs” to tackle sexual violence following the case.

Campana she suggested that in the best way to educate students on sexual harassment was through other students, which is why the video series she showcased star AUC students acting with each other. Campana stated that “training is practicing behaviors, educating is just knowing.” This is why she uses the arts as a form of activism, as students themselves must be in different roles that may make them uncomfortable, but will help them understand situations. Furthermore, the plays in Campana’s book *Not Your Fault* are free, accessible, and adaptable, so all students can use them to learn from them.

Before the event was concluded, several questions were asked. One of which was what it means for a training to be considered mandatory. Campana responded that it means videos such as the ones she created are integrated into freshman orientation. She also added that students watch them not because they have to, but because the videos are good, and people want to see them as well, as there is an aesthetic element to watching films. Another question was how can you prove harassment, as the case for Ahmed Basem Zaki? Campana responde with the fact that he received 93 accusations, and was reported guilty of 3 informal reports, so this is actually a big issue, and some report for the same of acknowledging what has already happened. An important question was how faculty and staff training would look like, and Campana stated that separate videos would be made for different categories within the education system.

The event included beverages and light snacks, and after a questioning period many audience members stayed to watch the rest of the videos that were not shown during the talk due to time pressures.