# How Baylor Happened

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**WACO, Texas —** There's not much to recommend spending four years in Waco. Driving into town up Interstate 35 from the south, the endless stretch of Texas nothing fills out slowly. It's flat in the way you think Texas is flat. Empty fields give way to John Deere dealerships, then fast-food chains. On your left, you'll see the strip mall that housed the Twin Peaks biker gang shootout of 2015. Pass through the city's squat downtown, and you can catch a glimpse of the grain silos that Chip and Joanna Gaines, stars of the HGTV smash *Fixer-Upper*, converted into the retail base of their reality TV empire.

But then, rising from the banks of the Brazos River, appears Baylor's towering McLane Stadium. The building serves to announce the home of the Baylor Bears, Robert Griffin III, the Heisman Trophy, and a football legacy stretching back to, well, RG3 and the Heisman Trophy. But that's the point. Baylor is here. Baylor matters, finally. The other campus buildings are tucked away in the short hills along the highway, but the stadium declares itself forcefully.

For most of its history, football barely registered at Baylor. Instead, the school cultivated its own culture, deeply rooted in the Baptist church. It banned dancing on campus until 1996. Until May 2015, its student conduct code listed "homosexual acts" and "fornication" as expressly forbidden behavior, alongside "sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault," and other activities. Sex outside of marriage is still forbidden. The university's mission statement says it was "founded on the belief that God's nature is made known through both revealed and discovered truth." Even a teenager who's been homeschooled her entire life can walk around Baylor, see the statues of Jesus and the sidewalks emblazoned with Bible passages, and feel safe that the university that speaks her language and shares her values.

Jane's* parents celebrated when she was offered a soccer scholarship to Baylor. She'd be among other Christians, less than two hours away from their Dallas home. Alicia* was drawn to Baylor because she wanted something to bring her back to her faith. She wanted to attend chapel with her classmates, to feel the closeness of a religious institution. "I want to feel God on campus and in class," she knew. "I want to come here to be with God in every sense of the matter."

Melissa* had attended a small private Baptist high school in California. She was scared to attend a party school and was looking for a more conservative university. She liked how nice everyone at Baylor was, and that dorm visiting hours ended at midnight, even on weekends. Suzanne* was the daughter of missionaries. She grew up mostly overseas and spent a lot of

time in Christian boarding schools in Papua New Guinea. College wasn't something her parents expected of her—everyone in her family did church work—but she wanted to be a missionary doctor.

They all chose Baylor because it felt safe.

What they didn't know when they enrolled was that the combination of Baylor's culture and a set of newly-established ambitions had created a university that was unusually safe—but not for them. It was a safe place for football coaches who could do no wrong, for players whose transfers from other teams after being accused of violence were billed as the first half of a redemption story, for young men whose potential was prioritized over that of their female classmates, and for university leaders who prized their reputation over the safety of the women who studied there.

If you're trying to make sense of reports coming out of Michigan State in the wake of Larry Nassar, or Ohio State or Texas A&M, there are lessons to learn from what happened at Baylor.

As Jane was beginning her senior year of high school, already committed to play soccer at Baylor in 2013, the university was breaking ground on McLane Stadium. Baylor had a vision for itself—to become the Baptist answer to Notre Dame—but accomplishing that would require money, a lot more money, and fast football success was also a fast way to excite major donors. Greed is not a Christian value, but as the world would soon find out, the school's commitment to the religion of football would serve to undermine everything else that the university was supposed to stand for.

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Three years ago, Baylor went from "hot pick to win the National Championship" to shorthand for the scourge of campus sexual assault, especially at universities where sports are king and players avoid consequences. If you're trying to make sense of reports coming out of Michigan State in the wake of Larry Nassar, or from Ohio State after accusations of sexual abuse within the wrestling and diving programs, or the scandals that emerged this summer at Texas A&M, there are lessons to learn from what happened at Baylor.

The unraveling at Baylor culminated in the firing of beloved head football coach Art Briles, the resignation of athletics director Ian McCaw, and the demotion and eventual resignation of university president Ken Starr in mid-2016. The chain of events that led to the drastic changes at the university was a long one.

Ahmad Dixon, the first four-star recruit Briles brought to Baylor after he was hired in 2007, was accused of domestic violence in 2011 and sexual assault a year later. In 2012 and 2013, five different Baylor football players or recruits would be named in police reports alleging

sexual assault or domestic violence. In 2014, linebacker Tevin Elliot was convicted of raping a female Baylor student. The following year, in August 2015, defensive end Samuel Ukwuachu stood trial for sexually assaulting another female Baylor athlete.

Ukwuachu's conviction became a national headline, dominating the news for days leading up to the 2015 season. In response, Starr retained law firm Pepper Hamilton to investigate the university's practices around sexual assault. Baylor's Title IX coordinator, Patty Crawford, also began looking into old cases. A steady trickle of media reports showed that the problems within Baylor's football program ran much deeper than a pair of defensive ends. In late 2016, Baylor's Board of Regents told the *Wall Street Journal* that 19 rapes had been committed by 17 football players since 2011, while a lawsuit filed by a woman who said she was raped by a Baylor football player claimed 52 acts of rape carried out by 31 players. The lawsuit was later settled.

Other students—and other arrests—indicated that the problems at Baylor extended well beyond football. Baylor administrators retained a high-powered crisis PR firm and testified before the Texas legislature while students began organizing to protest their university's inaction around the issue. And then, in May 2016, the school ousted Briles, McCaw, and Starr.

Baylor never published a full report from Pepper Hamilton. The school's administrators say no such report exists—only a slim 13-page summary of the investigation released as a Finding of Fact, along with a list of more than 100 recommendations. The university says those recommendations have been fully implemented, and that the changes they signify, along with the new leadership, means the Baylor of 2018 is not the Baylor of 2015 and before. In one statement, Baylor officials said: "Since May 2016, Baylor has taken unprecedented actions and implemented significant infrastructure, training, education, and policies and procedures under new leadership in response to the issue of past and alleged interpersonal violence involving our campus community."

But a number of the leaders who oversaw the crisis at the university remain, and an ex-frat president accused of rape recently received a plea deal that included zero jail time. Former president Ken Starr continues speaking publicly, and Briles reportedly was brought in yesterday to interview for an offensive coordinator coaching job at Southern Miss. As lawsuits unfold and information—in the form of sworn depositions, reports from students, and internal documents—continues to come out, the question still looms: How can anyone trust that Baylor has really changed?

Three years after the scandal first broke, efforts to rehabilitate the reputations of the men who led Baylor at the time are well underway.
Over the course of more than three years, Deadspin spoke with dozens of students, former university administrators, members of the Waco law enforcement and legal community, and community leaders. We reviewed many hundreds of pages of documents, including emails,

police reports, Title IX documents, police reports, lawsuits, and decades-old yearbooks. Relying on accounts from more than a dozen people, we traced Briles's history of dealing with players accused of sexual assault back to his time as a high school football coach in Stephenville, Texas. We learned much about the ways Baylor's handling of sexual misconduct issues differed from what appeared in the headlines. We also requested interviews with Baylor administrators on more than a dozen occasions—from both the university's in-house communications team and the crisis PR firm they hired in the wake of the scandal—almost none of which were ever granted.

Three years after the scandal first broke, efforts to rehabilitate the reputations of the men who led Baylor at the time are well underway. In a deposition released in June, McCaw attempted to shift the blame to Baylor's regents, campus police, and Pepper Hamilton—accusing all of them of a "smear campaign" against the athletics department. In July, former defensive coordinator Phil Bennett publicly defended the decisions made by Briles and his program. The following month, Briles's son Kendal told reporters it was a "great day" for his father, who had been hired to coach a semi-pro team based in Florence, Italy. Then Kendal, who had been an assistant for his father at Baylor, was hired as Florida State's offensive coordinator after stints at Florida Atlantic and the University of Houston. During the media tour for his new book rehashing his time as special prosecutor in the 1990s when he investigated Bill Clinton's sex life, Starr has continued to question the version of events Baylor has put forward. Hearing these men talk, three years later, you get the unmistakable impression that they believe themselves to be the true victims of the scandal that rocked Baylor.

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It was the night of the 2012 NFL Draft, and Briles had traded his green Baylor Bears cap and mock turtleneck for a grey striped suit and a gold tie. He was at Radio City Music Hall, watching as his star quarterback, Robert Griffin III, was selected at No. 2 overall. A few hours later, another former Baylor star, wide receiver Kendall Wright, was taken at No. 20. "It's just a feeling of complete gratitude and humbleness when you get to go that high," Briles told reporters after the draft. "I'm just extremely happy for both of those guys, and what they did for Baylor University."

Briles arrived in Waco in 2008 after five successful seasons at the University of Houston. He'd originally risen through the ranks of Texas high school coaches, where his success at Stephenville High School—transforming a historically non-competitive program into one that won four state championships between 1988 and 1999—is the stuff of legend. Then, upon coming to Baylor, he had another profound impact at a school that had been a perpetual also-ran.

But heading into the 2012-2013 season, Briles faced a new challenge: RG3 was gone. He'd won the first Heisman in Baylor history after a stunning final season as a Bear, but now the face of the team and its most potent weapon was in the NFL. And he wasn't alone: 2012 saw

more Bears drafted as were taken between 2000 and 2006 combined.

Briles began a serious recruitment campaign, adding three players who'd been in trouble in the past—Shawn Oakman, Darryl Stonum, and Mike Orakpo—to the roster as transfer students. (Orakpo ultimately never enrolled at Baylor.) The following year they were joined by a former freshman All-American pass rusher from Boise State named Sam Ukwuachu.

Oakman, a dynamic defensive end with uncanny intangibles and intimidating size, had been released by Penn State after a shoplifting arrest in which he put his hands on a woman who worked in the school cafeteria after she caught him stealing a sandwich. He was charged with a misdemeanor, paid a fine, and landed at Baylor in July 2012. That same month, Stonum—who'd been dismissed from Michigan after a series of drinking-relatedarrests, including two for driving while drunk—enrolled at Baylor as a grad student and joined the football squad as a wide receiver. Then, in May 2013, Ukwuachu transferred to Baylor after he was released by Boise State. Administrators and coaches at Boise State were troubled by Ukwuachu's behavior and his relationship with his ex-girlfriend; he was dismissed from the team after he put his fist through a window during an argument with his girlfriend. That's when Briles brought him to Baylor.

Briles leaned into well-worn narratives about the restorative power of football and of coaching boys into men. You could almost see Coach Taylor from *Friday Night Lights*. He published a book—*Beating Goliath: My Story of Football and Faith*—that was tailor-made for the Baylor base. In the book, he writes about turning "David to Goliath" and the redemptive power of sport. He promises that "the young men and fellow coaches I have worked with have managed to go from about as low a point as you could imagine to becoming champions." It's inspiring stuff, like something out of a movie. Briles casts himself as redeemer, proud of his desire to "find the good" in people.

Taking on players with baggage fit right in with Briles' self-ascribed persona, and with Baylor's reputation as "Second Chance U." A writer for CBS Sports wrote in 2012 that the decision to take on so many troubled players seemed like Baylor's way of "continuing its commitment to the fundamental Baptist virtues of forgiveness and rehabilitation." *Bleacher Report* published a glowing profile of Oakman at the start of the 2015 season, declaring him one of the "success stories" for Briles' squad of second-chancers. Briles, folksy as ever, told the reporter, "I've seen sicker dogs get well."

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Redemption is a noble goal—when it's rooted in accountability. Here's what the path to redemption at Baylor looked like in practice:

In January 2013, two and a half years before Briles explained that Oakman had gotten "well," a female Baylor student reported to Waco police that Oakman had hit her. By the time a detective followed up with her 11 days later, she had withdrawn from the school and left the

state. According to police reports, “her parents moved her back to [her home state] abruptly.” Without the woman’s participation, police closed the case.

In April 2016, Oakman was arrested for sexual assault. He currently awaits trial. His lawyer told Deadspinthat “Mr. Oakman has maintained from the beginning that he is innocent because the complainant engaged in consensual sex with him on the night in question.”

Stonum spent the 2012 season with Baylor, eventually signing with the Kansas City Chiefs as an undrafted free agent in 2013. That November, the girlfriend he’d lived with in Waco filed for a restraining order against him. She cited a series of abusive episodes, including two during their time together in Waco. By June 2014, he was out of the NFL and had moved back to Michigan, where he was convicted on domestic-violence charges.

The problems weren’t just with Briles’ second-chancers. In April 2013, a woman received a sexual-assault nurse’s examination while officers gathered evidence and took photos of injuries she said she sustained in an encounter with two Baylor players, Tre’von Armstead and Shamychael Chatman. According to the police report, Waco Police suspended the case in 2013, because they could not locate text messages and the woman was nervous about proceeding. The police report also indicates that Baylor officials were made aware of the incident, but Baylor didn’t investigate the charges until two years later. Once the school did finally investigate, Armstead was dismissed. (Chatman had already transferred to Sam Houston State.) Armstead and Chatman were both arrested in connection to the incident in March 2017, several years after the incidents, once media outlets began reporting on the allegations. Chatman’s lawyer told Deadspin, “My client has maintained his innocence from day one. He looks forward to his day in court and aggressively defending the case against him.” Armstead’s lawyer did not respond to a request for comment.

Another player Briles brought to Baylor had faced accusations back home before he ever got to Waco. Cordell Dorsey, a promising high-school recruit, had already committed to Baylor when he was arrested on suspicion of sexually assaulting his 11-year-old stepsister the previous summer, according to Taylor County court records. The allegations halted his recruitment, and he was suspended from Abilene Cooper High School’s team for much of the season, until he was reactivated—despite an ongoing grand jury investigation—once the team began its postseason run, according to a report from KTXS-TV. When the Taylor County grand jury eventually declined to prosecute the hometown football hero, Dorsey signed his financial aid paperwork for Baylor in April 2014, per 24/7 Sports. In July 2015, after his first season as a redshirt freshman, he was named as a suspect in an armed robbery in Waco, and he left Baylor soon after.

It would take years for people outside of the university to connect Elliott’s conviction, Dixon’s arrests, Dorsey’s recruitment, and the transfers of Briles’s second-chancers. In August 2015, Sam Ukwuachu was found guilty of sexual assault, and the name “Baylor” took on

dramatically different implications. (Ukwuachu was released from jail pending appeal after two months; an appeals court tossed his conviction, but a higher court reinstated it. There are still other appeals pending in the case.)

The world beyond Waco learned of Ukwuachu all at once, at the last minute, while he was on trial. Somehow, his name had been kept out of the local papers, even as he was arrested and his case proceeded through the criminal-justice system. That fact is even more shocking because he was the *second* Baylor football player to stand trial for rape in a two-year window; in 2012, Tevin Elliot was convicted of sexual assault. One player being convicted of rape can happen anywhere, but two in two years—with no one aware that the second was happening—smelled like a cover-up. What was *happening* down in Waco?

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When Patty Crawford started as Baylor's Title IX coordinator in November 2014, she had no idea how high-profile the task of investigating Title IX cases at the university would be. She was just there because she wanted to help. "I felt like it brought things together for me—social justice, empowerment of women, and looking at discrimination and educational opportunity," she said later.

Every American university was required to have a full-time Title IX coordinator on staff as a result of guidance issued by the Obama administration's Department of Education in the form of a 2011 "Dear Colleague" letter. Baylor was slow to hire theirs, but after finding Crawford through a recruiting firm, they hired her away from her job at a regional branch of Indiana University.

Crawford found herself overseeing a team tasked with a number of responsibilities: investigating Title IX violations—including sexual assault—involving Baylor students; educating Baylor's students as part of a focus on prevention; and uncovering past instances of non-compliance with Title IX.

Many of Crawford's responsibilities butted up against the prevailing culture at Baylor. When she went to observe existing sexual-assault prevention trainings, she says she learned that "there were non-compliant things being said in training to faculty and staff." When she took over those duties, Crawford says she wasn't even allowed to use the word "consent" when talking to students, unless the students were married. Otherwise, the university's administrators told her, it sounded like she was telling students that they could break the student conduct code's policy around sexual activity. A Baylor representative told Deadspin that, in the revised sexual assault policy drafted in August 2015, after Crawford's tenure began, "consent was covered extensively."

Crawford was constantly on edge when leading trainings, worried that she'd say something about sex or alcohol that the university didn't want her to say. She had to remove a slide from her presentation that said that one in five women are sexually assaulted—she was

told that it was “liberal propaganda.” A Baylor representative told Deadspin that the survey from which the statistic came from was “controversial,” and that “The University did not want audiences to be distracted by the statistics, but instead focus on training, education and assistance for students and the greater campus community.”

“That was the language of my bosses: ‘Hey, use your phone. Don’t put anything in writing, ever. Call everybody.’”
She also found Baylor students naive when it came to sex and dating. Some who came from devoutly Christian backgrounds would come to college without ever having learned anything in the way of sex ed. Crawford was baffled. She remembers student groups coming to her in June 2016, after Pepper Hamilton’s report was released, and asking her to come talk to them about sex. She found herself addressing sororities with hundreds of members, going “very 101” on topics they seemed desperate to learn. Crawford would explain the concept of sexual relationships to them in basic terms, explaining to large groups of young women that they had the right to choose whether to have sex with their partners. It helped explain a pattern that she found: Female students trusted their environment so much that they started putting themselves in difficult situations.

“I would work with students who would say, ‘He was my best friend,’ and I would ask how long they’ve known each other. ‘Well, a week,’” Crawford recalls. “‘He was the first person I met at Baylor, and I trusted him to get me home after going to my first party. I only had one drink, but I can’t remember everything.’”

She found that students would stay overnight at off-campus parties because they were concerned about Baylor police going through residence halls on weekend nights looking for tipsy students and taking them back to the police station. “They were so scared to go back to their own homes that they were staying in these houses where they don’t know people, they’re intoxicated—possibly incapacitated—and they’re being assaulted,” Crawford says.

Crawford saw that Baylor norms put women there at unique risk. “It was a culture of targeting,” Crawford says. “Predators could target freshman women for all of these reasons. They could target them and say, ‘Hey, you can trust me.’ I had a pattern case where it was a practice of this predator to become friends with women, tell them he doesn’t drink, that he’s a good Christian guy. He’d go to church with them and say, ‘Here’s my number, call me if you need a ride home from a party,’ and he was taking women home from parties,” where, she says, multiple women told her that he sexually assaulted them.

Crawford was responsible for trying to bring this system into compliance under federal regulation, but she was baffled by the things she uncovered. She learned that Baylor had only one formal hearing for sexual assault in the five years before she arrived at the university. Other complaints reached their end in the judicial affairs office. Between Aug. 20,

2015—when a jury found Ukwuachu guilty—and Aug. 20, 2016, Crawford's office held more than 30 such hearings. It was more in that one year, she says, than in the entire history of the university combined.

Sexual assault was something of a grey area at Baylor in terms of how seriously the university treated the issue. Underage drinking, meanwhile, was one they cared deeply about—at least, when it wasn't athletes doing the drinking.
Sexual assault was something of a grey area at Baylor in terms of how seriously the university treated the issue. Underage drinking, meanwhile, was one they cared deeply about—at least, when it wasn't athletes doing the drinking. Three different federal lawsuits against Baylor—dating back even to before Briles's time at the university—say that students who were raped at Baylor were discouraged from reporting because they had been drinking. "A number of victims were told that if they made a report of rape, their parents would be informed of the details of where they were and what they were doing," Houston attorney Chad Dunn told the Associated Press in 2016. It echoed something you'd hear from victims and the people who knew them in Waco: The first reaction from the university's judicial affairs department would be about what the parents would be told. (Baylor never directly addressed these concerns, but in late 2015, the school quietly added amnesty provisions for drug and alcohol use to students who report sexual assault to the university.)

Crawford was dealing with Baylor's Judicial Affairs office and a university police department that, she said, made her job more challenging. It took Crawford a year to convince Baylor police that federal guidelines required officers to report sexual assault to the Title IX coordinator, she says. And Waco police made the university officers seem downright easy to deal with. She'd sometimes read about cases she was investigating in the news after being unable to access the documents she needed herself. "I have no idea why," she says. "All I can figure is that there are personal relationships between Waco [police] and the university that have existed for a long time." Reached for comment, Waco police spokesman Sgt. Swanton responded "No. Sorry…Nothing I can help you with here."

These relationships made investigations extremely difficult. When Pepper Hamilton's findings of fact were released, Baylor claimed that there was no "full report"—that the presentation from the firm had been delivered orally. Skeptical observers questioned how that could possibly be true, but Crawford was unsurprised. "Baylor has historically practiced not documenting things," she says. "That was the language of my bosses: 'Hey, use your phone. Don't put anything in writing, ever. Call everybody.'"

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Waco was rocked by the revelation about Ukwuachu. Baylor had been a sleepy school that found itself drunk on football. Then, suddenly, the chyrons on ESPN were no longer about the university's explosive offense, but about its players sexually assaulting women. Waco media had looked away, and the hard questions that the city and the school might have expected after Elliot's conviction were never asked. Instead, Baylor built a $266 million

stadium, mostly paid for by regent emeritus and mega-booster Drayton McLane in the single largest gift in the university's history. The week of the Ukwuachu trial, until the Thursday evening he was convicted, sports media's dominant narrative about Baylor was still the open question of whether this would finally be the season they brought a national championship to Waco.

But the whole time Baylor was winning games, building stadiums, and basking in on-field glory, its coaches were managing a series of incidents they were desperate to keep from dominating the news. Briles' players were frequently in trouble, and internal communications from the coach to his staff show they worked hard to ensure that their players' names didn't end up in front of the university's judicial affairs department or cross Patty Crawford's desk.

When reports reached their own desks, meanwhile, the coaching staff sometimes appeared to lack urgency. According to a lawsuit against the university, after a female Baylor athlete reported that she'd been raped by "at least four, and, according to some reports, as many as eight" Baylor football players in 2012, she told her own coach the names of the players who sexually assaulted her. The coach took that list to Briles, whose responded by questioning why the woman was around those players, then advising the coach to tell the woman to call police.

Ukwuachu was accused of rape in October 2013 but, even after the young woman in question went to the school's judicial affairs department, he was not disciplined. His name appeared on the active roster for the football team until June 2014, when the McLennan County district attorney secured an indictment. At that point, defensive coordinator Phil Bennett acknowledged only that Ukwuachu "will not practice for awhile" because he had "some issues" that would keep him from playing. (He continued doing conditioning with the team.) The football program's commitment to maintaining an all-is-well image included the team's defensive coordinator publicly declaring on the radio, shortly before Ukwuachu was scheduled to stand trial on rape charges, that he expected the player to be back on the field soon.

Such obfuscation wasn't uncommon. According to legal documents, when a freshman defensive tackle was cited for illegally consuming alcohol, Briles sent a text message to an assistant that read, "Hopefully he's under [the] radar enough they won't recognize [his] name" before asking if the ticket came from Waco police or Baylor's own force. "Just trying to keep him away from our judicial affairs folks."

Briles insisted, via an open letter addressed to "Baylor Nation" and published in early March 2017, that none of this meant that he protected his players from the consequences of their actions. "Rumor, innuendo and out of context messages, emails and comments have no

place in a true fact-finding mission," Briles wrote. His supporters then treated the information from the Pepper Hamilton report as a biased smear campaign, ignoring the evidence that a number of his players were indeed avoiding accountability.

It echoed something you'd hear if you talked to victims and the people who knew them in Waco—that the first reaction from the university's judicial affairs department would be about what the parents would be told.
Being at Baylor was an ideal set-up for what Briles was building: He was in a quiet town where stories like Ukwuachu could somehow end up buried; his university's Christian reputation gave him the chance to present his decision to present his recruits as a righteous quest for redemption; the atmosphere at Baylor led the young, Christian women to stay quiet if they found themselves becoming victims. He was able, for years, to keep what was happening under the surface contained. His players could be accused of beating their girlfriends, and the girlfriends would leave town. His players could be accused of gang-rapes of female Baylor students, and he'd be permitted to question why they were around the players he brought to their campus.

And accounts of the women who came to Baylor because it felt safe say Briles' staff used them to market the program to prospective players. A lawsuit filed by a former Baylor student claimed that Kendal Briles—Art Briles' son, and his offensive coordinator—asked a prospective recruit, "Do you like white women? Because we have a lot of them at Baylor, and they love football players." Briles denies this; the suit was settled.

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When the Baylor scandal broke, Dorothy* was not among the people who were shocked by the change in Briles' public persona from straight-talking, avuncular Texan who coach boys into men to someone who chose to protect his players at the expense of sexual-assault victims.

"It is major that Baylor, better late than never, choose human rights over football," she wrote to Deadspin. "I went to high school in Stephenville, where Briles coached from '89-'98. Briles played accused rapists there." She went on to describe how she knew: The player who raped her, she said, was one of them.

Dorothy says she confided in her English teacher in the spring of 1991 that while she was at a house party, she was raped by a football player in one of the bedrooms. The teacher, Dorothy said, brought her to a counselor, who encouraged her to go to the police. (Deadspin has corroborated these details with multiple people who worked at the school at the time.) Dorothy's father took her to the police station, where she filed a report. The player was never arrested, and Stephenville police did not have a copy of the report, which involved two minors, when asked about it by Deadspin 27 years later.

A star student, Dorothy was working on a student council project when she had to introduce herself to Briles to ask him a question. “When he heard my name,” she recalls, “He said, ‘So you’re the one all this fuss is about.’” According to a source who served on the Stephenville school board at the time, Briles was well aware of the accusation against his player. (Briles’ attorney, Ernest Cannon, refused to provide a direct answer when asked by Deadspin if the coach was aware of the allegations at the time.)

Stephenville is a tight-knit community of 21,000 people, and even after the Baylor scandal broke, Briles’ reputation didn’t suffer the same bruising there that it did in the rest of the country. In the lobby of Stephenville High School, the school commemorates members of its Hall of Fame, and a plaque honoring Briles—along with fired former Baylor assistant Colin Shillinglaw, and former Baylor staffers Kendal Briles and Randy Clements—still sits among them, boasting of his prowess with the Yellow Jackets. Questions about Briles and what happened with Dorothy and the football player in 1991 still makes people nervous.

Dorothy’s family is nervous, too. They agreed to speak to Deadspin, but did not want to be identified. But in a small town like Stephenville, they fear it may be inevitable. When Dorothy’s father learned what happened to his daughter, he says, he drove to Briles’ house to ask the coach what he planned to do about his athlete. Briles’ attorney, when asked if he remembered the visit, said, “Coach Briles doesn’t recall such an event from 27 years ago.”

“Art didn’t handle it right,” Dorothy’s father says. “When I found out, I went straight to his house and told him what happened. He was taken aback. He couldn’t believe it. He said, ‘What do you want me to do?’ He said it was a ‘he-said/she-said’ at this point. There was no indictment. He didn’t know what to do.”

Dorothy’s father isn’t angry at Briles—he reserves his fury for the Stephenville Police Department, which he believes decided not to get involved. Nearly three decades later, people in Stephenville still don’t want to get involved. When Deadspin called the police officer who Dorothy first spoke to about the incident, he said he didn’t remember anything about the case. A half dozen other sources—lawyers who were involved in the case, former teammates of the player in question, high school friends of Dorothy’s—all declined to speak on the record. One source who worked at the school at the time, who agreed to be quoted anonymously, says that Briles was “considered a God” and “the boys were put on pedestals.”

“It would be amazing how many people knew about it, but didn’t give it a second thought,” Dorothy’s father says. “When you come to a school that has won 10 games in the previous hundred years, and you turn them into four state championships, always in the playoffs, fun, fun, fun, and the gate receipts are a half million dollars a year from a little bitty town, that’s fun.”

When contacted by Deadspin, the accused student replied, “How did you get my email address,” and declined to speak further about the incident, directing further correspondence to a Stephenville lawyer who didn’t respond to requests for comment. Cannon’s responses to Deadspin’s questions about the coach’s knowledge of the incident did not include an answer, but when Deadspin asked Mark Lanier—another attorney who represented Briles earlier in the year—about the allegations in early 2018, Lanier sent a statement from Briles that said “First I have heard of that …don’t have any recollection—don’t remember any assault incident being reported to school authorities, or police—certainly not to me—crazy stuff !!” *[sic]* In August 2018, Starr, citing his “very deep, personal friendship” with Lanier, joined the Lanier Law Firm.

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On May 26, 2016, Baylor released a 13-page summary of Pepper Hamilton’s investigation, which showed that Briles and his program had operated under its own rules. The full report was delivered only as an oral presentation to the Boards of Regents, which meant that critics of the university who wanted to see additional documentation were often stymied. The findings of fact laid out the firm’s discoveries in extremely vague language , offering almost no specific examples and naming no names. Still, it concluded that there had been broad, systemic failure at Baylor, and that the university “failed to take action to identify and eliminate a potential hostile environment.” The report concluded that those failures occurred across the board at the university, but singled out Briles’ program for special attention, saying that “it created the perception that football was above the rules.”

According to Baylor regents cited in court documents, when Colin Shillinglaw, the football team’s director of operations, received a police report from Waco police accusing Shawn Oakman of domestic violence, he did not share the information with administrators outside of athletics. When asked by Pepper Hamilton about the incident involving Oakman, Shillinglaw told the firm’s investigators that he didn’t remember anything about it. Shillinglaw’s lawyer did not respond to Deadspin’s request for comment.

They had a grander ambition: to become the nation’s most prominent Protestant university, a Baptist answer to Notre Dame.
It’s not unheard of for athletics programs to attempt to handle investigations internally. But at a school like Baylor, where football had been an afterthought for most of its history, coaches were rarely the most powerful people on campus. To understand how a football program at a university like Baylor ends up running its own investigations—and deliberately keeping the rest of the school’s administrators in the dark—it’s important to understand how Baylor’s culture changed in the early part of the century. By 2002, Baylor’s board of regents and then-president Robert Sloan had developed a grand ambition: to become the nation’s most prominent Protestant university, a Baptist answer to Notre Dame.

Baylor announced its new goals in 2002 with the release of an ambitious 10-year growth plan called "Baylor 2012." Sloan didn't stick around to see it realized, though, after a 2003 scandal that arose out of Baylor's basketball program. (In that one: Baylor basketball player Patrick Dennehy was murdered by a teammate. During the ensuing investigation, then-head coach Dave Bliss, to cover up him having paid Dennehy under the table, lied and said Dennehy was a drug dealer.) Sloan was replaced in 2005 by John Lilley, whose short tenure ended after he attempted to unilaterally change the school's logo. Failures of leadership appeared to be dooming the school's lofty ambitions until, in 2010, the Board of Regents appointed Starr.

Some were shocked by the board's choice to anoint Starr—he wasn't even a Baptist—but he embraced the ideals of Baylor 2012 and quickly earned Baylor Nation's respect. As he oversaw the final years of the growth plan, Starr launched an effort to raise $100 million in three years for a scholarship initiative to offset tuition hikes. He met his goal early. It appeared that the university was well on its way to realizing the Baylor 2012 vision statement: "Within the course of a decade, Baylor intends to enter the top tier of American universities while reaffirming and deepening its distinctive Christian mission."

It takes massive resources to pursue a total overhaul, so the university's long-held pay-as-you-go policy was cast aside in favor of $247 million in bonds issued by the school. The burden of that debt was passed on to students—between 2002 and 2012, the cost of a year's tuition nearly doubled, from $27,306 to $51,214. (By 2016-2017, it was $59,252, nearly $15,000 more than the average cost of a private university.) Fundraising was up, too, buoyed by Baylor's commitment to the tenth "imperative" of Baylor 2012: To "build with integrity a winning athletic tradition in all sports."

Briles delivered the "winning" part of that, at least. The Bears regularly played on ESPN and ABC, and Baylor saw its name atop the NCAA rankings. But it also highlighted the ultimate problem with Baylor 2012. The university wanted to be important, and to do that, it desperately needed money to keep up with the hundreds of millions of dollars in new debt it had taken on. It quickly became obvious that football was its best source of both fundraising and the sort of brand-building that made students want to shell out $56,000 a year.

When winning football games came into conflict with its stated mission "to educate men and women for worldwide leadership and service by integrating academic excellence and Christian commitment within a caring community," Baylor was hardly the first school to pick on-field success ahead of the values it claimed to cherish. But what was striking was how swiftly it all happened, how easily the decision to choose football seemed to come, and—as their new Title IX coordinator would learn—how the Baptist university's leadership continued to prize its Christian reputation in ways that made it harder for her to do her job.

In the fall of 2015, after the Ukwuachu scandal broke, Crawford and her team began investigating old cases. That September, a recent graduate contacted Crawford's office to re-report an incident from earlier that year involving two Baylor players, Tre'von Armstead and Shamycheal Chatman. The investigation led to Armstead's expulsion. (According to a lawsuit filed by the woman, she was the second Baylor student to tell the athletic department that Chatman had raped her. After she reported the incident, he transferred to Sam Houston State.) They also looked into the 2013 domestic violence claims against Shawn Oakman. These investigations, too, were met with obstacles from Baylor officials. One of Crawford's investigators, Gabby Lyons, recalls Baylor police warning her not to interview Baylor football players because of the potential for them to be violent. (Lyons filed a Title IX lawsuit against Baylor, which was dismissed by a judge who said she "failed to support her claim with facts" earlier this month.)

Crawford struggled to make sense of the two competing cultures she found at Baylor: one set up to help the successful, revenue-generating football program succeed at any cost, and one determined to please the largely conservative religious parents and donors whose children and money kept the school functioning.

In September 2015, Crawford learned of a "hostess" organization called the Baylor Bruins, a group of female Baylor students who would escort football recruits through campus and the stadium on game days and ensure that they left the school feeling good about their time at Baylor. Crawford began asking Bruins members about the organization, learning that they wore a uniform of tight, fitted polo shirts, short shorts, and cowboy boots, and that they applied to the organization by submitting a photo.

The woman who reported Armstead and Chatman was a former Bruin; her suit alleges that "Baylor football coaching staff arranged for women to have sex with recruits on their official campus visits."

"I learned that there were five Bruins who had to leave the Bruins because they got pregnant with babies of football players," Crawford says.She began investigating what happened to those students to ensure that they weren't losing employment opportunities, because pregnant and parenting students are protected under Title IX.

The university's executive council said "'Oh, no, no, all these women left on their own accord,'" Crawford recalls. "'They aren't Bruins anymore because they had to leave school because they're having babies.'" With the women no longer attending Baylor, Crawford wasn't in a position to address their specific cases through Title IX, but the Bruins organization was shut down soon after that meeting.

A Baylor spokesperson says the sole member of Starr's executive council who is still at Baylor does not remember any conversations about any Bruins member being pregnant. In a statement, Baylor officials said the Bruins had an official policy of "no sexual contact with

recruits/prospective athletes or current football players" and that the decision to shut down the Bruins came after "a series of issues at other universities."

Crawford says she talked to dozens of women who reported being raped at Baylor. Women at Baylor reported being raped by athletes, by fraternity members, by journalism students and engineers. But one thing stood out to Crawford when she investigated the cases involving football players. "The athletic ones were violent," she says. "Consistently violent. I had violent cases that were non-athletes, but there were some consistent things: specifically, gang rape. The majority of the gang rape allegations that were made to me were related to athletics—specifically, football. There was a consistent thing of being part of a team or a brotherhood."

Crawford resigned from Baylor in October 2016 and filed an employment discrimination complaint with the U.S. Department of Education (which she says is still pending. The Department of Education did not respond to a request for updates on any of the complaints filed about Baylor). She did so, she says, because she was being impeded by the university in carrying out her job duties. After she resigned, Baylor quickly declared a scorched-earth public relations campaign against their former Title IX coordinator. The university released a statement that claimed that "her demands in advance of mediation for one million dollars and book and movie rights were troubling."

Crawford's lawyer, Rogge Dunn, strongly disputes this account. A Dallas-based attorney with a distinctly Texas demeanor, he says that Baylor violated the law in discussing private mediation in the first place, and describes their characterization of what happened as "bullshit."

"The two parties went to mediation regarding her employment claims," he says. "I can't say what happened with regards to that, but Baylor said that they'd pay her $50,000 to sign a non-disclosure, non-disparagement agreement. She said no. They came back and said they'd pay $350,000, and she said no. They offered half a million, she said no. Then they offered $1.5 million dollars, and she still said no," Dunn says. "They put that statement out to say that she wanted to retain her book and movie rights. What she said was that she wasn't going to agree to keep quiet for a million and a half dollars."

"It paints the picture that Baylor isn't actually Christian, and they were not going to jeopardize the painting of that picture to expose this kind of truth."
Crawford now works at a marketing agency in Augusta, Georgia. She says she started receiving 10 to 20 threatening phone calls a day after the Pepper Hamilton report was released in 2016, so she values her privacy when talking about details now. But she is open about her belief about why Baylor's leadership—even after Briles was fired and the university had ostensibly moved on from the sexual violence crisis that had unfolded under his leadership—sought to keep things as quiet as they could.

“It rocks the boat in terms of the Christian picture that donors and alumni, and potential students and their families have,” Crawford says. “These people in Texas, and Colorado, and California, and these places where they recruit a lot of Baptist students to come—it paints the picture that Baylor isn’t actually Christian, and they were not going to jeopardize the painting of that picture to expose this kind of truth.”

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Around 10 a.m. on May 26, 2016, the phones of Baylor football players started buzzing. Art Briles had sent his team a text message.

“To current and former players,” he wrote, “Hurtful to report that there’s a release coming out at 11 a.m. and it’s to declare that I’m no longer the head football coach at Baylor University.” He apologized for not gathering the team for a meeting, but events were unfolding fast. He told them that the rest of the coaching staff would remain. Then he thanked his players for their “love trust and loyalty.” “Stay strong, stay motivated, stay faithful,” he wrote. “Love ya forever.” He ended it with the hashtag “#family.”

That same morning, Baylor’s board of regents voted to demote Starr. Baylor also got rid of a handful of lower-level staffers, mostly from within football and athletics, whom the university opted not to name. McCaw resigned a few days later.

Within hours of Briles’s text, the 13-page summary from Pepper Hamilton hit the Baylor website, revealing many details of what went on under Briles’ watch. Over the next few months, Briles would begin an aggressive PR campaign in an attempt to rehabilitate his image and win a new coaching job. At first, he was defiant, seeking sympathy from fans. “I’ve never done anything illegal, immoral, or unethical,” he told reporters that August while visiting a Houston Texans practice. Still keen on folksy dog metaphors, he compared the lack of football in his life to when a beloved pet escapes the yard. “I’m excited about coaching again. I really am, because, you know, if you lose your dog all of a sudden, you’re looking around hollering for him. Just stay up late at night looking for him. I’ve lost my dog. My dog’s football. I’m ready to go find it again.”

He didn’t find it as the fall began and football season kicked off across the country. By September, he was trying out a new tack in how he presented himself. He was contrite, explaining that “There were some bad things that went on under my watch.” He discussed accountability: “I did wrong. I made some mistakes. For that, I’m sorry.” He claimed he’d be prowling the sidelines again before long: “My plan is to be in it in December,” he said, but at the end of the year, Briles found himself passed over for opportunities including Purdue and his old stomping grounds at the University of Houston.

Faced with the realization that his coaching career might be over, he filed suit against three members of Baylor’s board of regents, as well as Baylor senior vice president and chief operating officer Reagan Ramsower, for libel, slander, and conspiring to keep him from

being hired by another program. A month later, his former assistant Shillinglaw joined him in his libel suit. In Baylor's response to Shillinglaw's lawsuit, the university released a number of internal text messages between Briles, Shillinglaw, McCaw, and others, which had been obtained as part of the Pepper Hamilton investigation. The day before those messages, which showed the cavalier way the staff communicated about allegations of sexual assault and harassment were made public, Briles quietly dropped his lawsuit.

When Briles was fired, his assistants—including his son, Kendal, and his daughter's husband, Jeff Lebby—stayed on the football staff under interim head coach Jim Grobe. Not long afterward, a group of Baylor's biggest donors led by Drayton McLane—the namesake of the football stadium—and John Eddie Williams—whose statue appears not far from RG3's outside of the gates—formed an organization called "Bears for Leadership Reform." After a press conference announcing the organization, McLane declared that "the board made drastic decisions, and the regents don't discuss how and why they made the decisions that they made."

Meanwhile, most members of the coaching staff tweeted Briles' "#TruthDontLie" slogan. They shared a list of "facts" meant to show that Briles followed protocol properly after a reported gang rape, and encouraged fans to side with the former coach over the university. During a game in which fans participated in a planned #BlackoutForCAB [Coach Art Briles] event by wearing black t-shirts, the Baylor football team took the field in their alternate black jerseys. The university insisted that the two actions were unrelated.

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Alicia came to Baylor because she wanted to be closer to God. She had done her best to convince herself that Baylor could be the school she wanted it to be after she was raped. It wasn't Baylor's fault—her assailant hadn't even been a student—but watching the way parts of the university community rallied around Briles left her feeling wounded. Watching the infighting between the Board of Regents and Briles loyalists made her feel like people in her situation weren't Baylor's priority. By the fall of 2016, her feelings about the university had hardened.

"The hardest thing I've ever done is exist in this place that never wanted me to survive."
"I hate Baylor for what they're doing to [other women who've reported]. I love everything this school has given me, but it is so damn hard to be here every day," she said at the time. "All the 'CAB' stuff really pushed me over the fucking edge. The hardest thing I've ever done is exist in this place that never wanted me to survive. I used to love this place. I really did. But Baylor never loved me back. And it still doesn't." A few weeks later, Alicia transferred to another university.

On Feb. 8, 2016—nearly six months after Ukwuachu's trial, and three and a half months before the Pepper Hamilton report was released—almost 200 Baylor students, joined by many faculty members, gathered for a vigil outside of the Allbritton House, the university

president's on-campus residence.

A handful of women handed out cards printed with a statement that read, "Baylor University's administration promises justice to students that are victims of sexual violence. We believe Baylor University has, to date, failed to fulfill this promise." Attendees gathered just a few dozen feet from the columns that flanked the colonial mansion's entrance, their heads bowed. They prayed. They sang, "This Little Light Of Mine." A young woman read a poem.

The assembly processed silently to the chapel at Truett Seminary. A pastor led them in prayer. A young woman made the plea, "May God bless us with enough foolishness to believe that we can make a difference in this world." Another petitioned, "May sexual abuse survivors be a sign of your glory."

Baylor's administration painted a different picture of the event. The school posted photos on social media, declaring that the vigil had taken place "to support those who have been impacted personally by sexual violence and shine a light on the issue." Starr himself wrote a press release thanking the students, declaring that "we hear you" that they'd like the school to improve its policies. One could be forgiven for assuming that the school's administrators had organized the rally themselves.

"I had hoped the school I knew and loved, one that claimed Christian roots, would have at least tried to put the survivors first, not tried to stifle their outcry."
Two years later, more accurate information about Baylor's role in the event emerged. Media reports revealed that Baylor student activities director Matt Burchett had worked with the students who organized the vigil and subsequent demonstrations to push them toward painting Baylor more as an ally and less as an adversary. Burchett, who participated in the meetings in an official capacity, was described as a "mole" who "infiltrated" the groups.

"I don't know that he can accurately be termed a 'mole' when it was very obvious he was operating in his capacity as student activities director," a student who helped organize the vigil told Deadspin, "I don't believe the man did anything illegal, or even necessarily unethical. I do believe his and the university's attempts to shape student responses to a legal and moral disaster on Baylor's part represents a moral failure of its own, especially given Baylor's Baptist roots. It does not surprise me that Baylor was doing everything possible to tamp down student responses to present the best possible public face, but it does disappoint me. I had hoped the school I knew and loved, one that claimed Christian roots, would have at least tried to put the survivors first, not tried to stifle their outcry."

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On March 8, 2016—before Pepper Hamilton's work was finished or Briles, Starr, or McCaw had left their positions—Kevin Jackson, Baylor's vice president for student life, spoke to seven members of the Texas House of Representatives' higher education committee during

a hearing about campus sexual assault. When Rep. Travis Clardy asked the administrator how, as a Baptist institution, Baylor is equipped to deal with sexual assault, Jackson spoke of the standards to which the students are held, and the school's hope that its faith-based mission has a positive impact on student behavior. "We work with them and walk alongside them to help them become more and more the person that God has designed them to be," Jackson told the legislators. "We understand, however, that we live in a fallen world."

No one has learned that lesson more clearly than the women who became victims at Baylor, who continue to survive the experiences they had at the school.

In April 2016, Taylor* went to the Title IX office to report that she'd been raped over spring break by a classmate. Taylor was hardly an activist. When the Ukwuachu story had put Baylor in headlines the previous semester, she thought people were being too hard on the university. She didn't understand why people acted like Baylor had a problem when the issue was just a few guys who played football. You could find that anywhere.

But when she went to the Title IX office after she was raped, Taylor felt like she was a low priority for the people she spoke to. "I felt like that from the moment that I sat down in the Title IX office, and they asked, 'Is he a football player?' and I said no," she says. "It was like they thought, 'Okay, this one might not get to the news.'" (Crawford told Deadspin in December that it was common practice to ask questions about extracurricular activities to see if complainants needed assistance with a remedial action to continue participating in those activities themselves.)

It took nearly a year for Taylor's case to be resolved. (At the time, the U.S. Department of Education recommended that resolutions take no more than 60 days.) Eventually, the assailant was found responsible for the sexual assault—but by that point, he had already transferred to another university. Devastated that he was able to escape accountability, Taylor worked with a Texas state senator to create legislation that would prevent students under Title IX investigation from transferring schools while the investigation was ongoing. The bill died in the Texas legislature, an institution with its own problems around sexual predators.

In October, the Big 12 Conference completed a 21-month review that confirmed Baylor had made the necessary improvements to its policies surrounding sexual assault—even as it issued a $2 million fine on the university for "reputational damage to the conference and its members." For anyone who wants to know if the culture at Baylor has truly changed, questions linger.

The back-and-forth from both sides suggests that everyone is a scapegoat, that no one is responsible, and that the blame always lies with someone else.

In April 2017, Baylor hired Linda Livingstone as its first female president. She acknowledged the problems that had occurred in the years that arrived, and addressed the Pepper Hamilton recommendations specifically, telling the *Texas Tribune* that those recommendations were "structurally complete."

She couched her statements in the religious language the university has been built around since its founding. "At a very high level, we are going to continue to strengthen the Christian mission and look at how we are embedding it through the experience students have." This summer, as Baylor's former coaches attacked the administration, Livingstone declared a new era at Baylor. "We implemented all of those recommendations, and [have] done that so fully to be at a completely different place now than where we were four years ago," she said.

But the university's ambitions are still just as lofty the ones outlined in the Baylor 2012 plan. In December 2016, Baylor hired Matt Rhule, a young, high-flying football coach with a reputation for turning around struggling programs, introducing him at a celebration in front of 2,000 devoted football fans. Livingstone boasts of the school's academic ambitions, too —"Our aspiration [is] to be a tier-one research university," she told the *Tribune*. "To do that as a Christian university is a very unique thing."

During the 2017 season, the university police department received a report of possible rape on campus involving two Baylor football players. The police reports released to Deadspin said nothing other than that a report was taken and "case is active." Over the summer, a grand jury declined to indict. Weeks later, another Title IX coordinator left Baylor. According to profile, she now runs a Title IX consulting firm. Meanwhile, the university continues to squabble publicly with former regents and former coaches about who is responsible for the sexual assault epidemic.

The football team has yet to return to its winning ways. Briles spent less than 24 hours as an assistant coach in the Canadian Football League until public outcry caused the Hamilton Tiger-Cats to revoke their offer. (Baylor's general counsel, in a surprising display of Southern Baptist gentility, provided a reference letter.) He's now coaching semi-pro ball in Italy. Whether he'll ever again spread his folksy sayings on the sidelines in the United States is an open question.

An ongoing lawsuit brought by 10 female former Baylor students has led to multiple depositions from administrators there during the years in question (including McCaw and Crawford), and Briles has turned over thousands of documents. A former player is suing the school on claims that his Title IX case was handled poorly. The NCAA has been investigating the university's handling of sexual assault reports—a spokesman told Deadspin, "We cannot comment on current, pending or potential investigations." The Texas Rangers are looking into what happened at Baylor too. And three former football players are still awaiting trial for sexual assault: Oakman, Armstead, and Chatman.

Institutions inspire a loyalty that even the actions of the people who run those institutions can't overshadow. Baylor isn't just the administration, its athletics program, or the collection of horror stories that took place in and around its campus. Understanding that might be the key to moving forward.

"I really think if Baylor doesn't do anything to help, *I* can do something to help," Taylor says one morning while sitting on the couch of her apartment near campus. "I'm an orientation and line camp leader. "I still love Baylor. Not necessarily the way that I did. I love the *idea* of Baylor. What Baylor is supposed to be, and what it's supposed to stand for."

** The names of certain people in this story have been changed at their request to protect them from threats and harassment.*

*Correction: Due to an editing error, the title of the job that Art Briles reportedly interviewed for at Southern Miss was incorrect. It has been corrected.*

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*Dan Solomon and Jessica Luther co-wrote 'Silence at Baylor,' the first in-depth investigation into the Baylor sexual assault scandal, in August 2015 at* Texas Monthly*, which Ken Starr cited as the reason he decided to hire Pepper Hamilton to uncover the details of the school's failings around the issue. Solomon and Luther both live in Austin, Texas, with their families.*