



What about Robb?

Ethos' Darryl Frierson goes one on one with false-rape reporter Katie Robb.

Ethos writer Darryl G.W. Frierson wrote an essay in the October issue of *Ethos* on how it feels to be a black man on a mostly white campus, especially in light of the Katie Robb incident. Robb falsely reported that four black men kidnapped her at gunpoint in front of Gilman Hall in the middle of the day before taking her to a wooded area outside of town to gang rape her. She pleaded guilty and received probation at her sentencing hearing in January. Shortly after that, she contacted Darryl and offered him an interview. Here are excerpts of that interview:



“That I had been kidnapped at gunpoint, driven to a wooded area and sexually assaulted by four men.”



Darryl G.W. Frierson: I want to thank you for the interview. Everything is straightforward and whatever you want to say you can say it.

Katie Robb: OK, cool.

DF: What is your situation with school now?

KR: I am going to Drake, but I haven't decided if that is permanent or just going to be for a while. I really like the big-school atmosphere. Drake obviously doesn't offer that.

DF: Are you still in journalism?

KR: I want to go to law school. I don't want to do journalism, but I like to write so it worked out well for an undergrad degree. I would like to be a trial lawyer, but I would like to maybe write for a legal journal later.

DF: Were you told to go to another school?

KR: It was a mutual decision. I was not kicked out of school, but obviously I am not a really loved person around Iowa State. Although, I am not angry at Iowa State. I thought it would be time for me to move on, and that seemed to go over well with everyone involved.

DF: Concerning the incident, recall the day before this happened. What was going on in your life?

KR: The thing that was really weird was that

everything was going really well. I was doing well in school. I had the classes I wanted, and I did well last year. I made the drum line, which I was excited about because that is something I really wanted to do. That's another reason I came to Iowa State because small schools don't have drum lines. And I was doing well in my sorority and everything, so I don't remember anything happening to me the day before or before the incident. If you turn off your tape recorder and don't write it down, I will tell you what really happened right before that.

[INTERVIEW RESUMES]

DF: Some have called your actions discriminatory. How do you feel about this?

KR: It wasn't at all a discriminatory thing. It's so hard for me to even defend myself against that because like everyone is saying I am racist. I have never had to think about being racist because the neighborhood I live in is right next to the neighborhood of, you know. My parents are doctors, so I don't have any trouble with money, but my parents have taught me to not take anything for granted and not to look down on anybody. So I always went to school in the neighborhood that had the surgeon's children that lived on one side of me and the people whose parents didn't have any money on the other side of me. So I never had an economic thing, and I never had a skin color thing. All my friends were black, white, Asian and everything else. Like I was in drum line, and half the group is black. My friends have always been black. I was looking through pictures for something that I was working on at home, and my pictures back in kindergarten have people who are all different races. It was just not something I ever thought about. For me, it just didn't matter to me. Not that I don't care, but it was not a discriminatory issue. It's like one of the people who wrote a letter to the court on my behalf is a guy I have known since I was in elementary school who is one of the African-American advocate guys in our com-



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munity at home. He couldn't believe that this came out of any of this because his group was 100 percent minority when I started in it. I was [one of] the only girls, and I was the only white person in the whole group. That didn't faze me. Whatever. Maybe I just wasn't paying enough attention to notice. That's been the hardest part in all of this honestly because that's always been something important to me was to have access to all different people from a lot of different backgrounds and cultures and whatever else. I don't want anyone thinking I am racist. People who know me know...

DF: How did your family react to the false allegations you made?

KR: My brother was really excited because he got to be the good child for a while. He was thrilled, but I'm back to being the good child now that he got his report card, so we're OK. My parents were really supportive. Obviously, they wish this never happened. They wish I hadn't done this. They are really intent on me going to counseling and figuring out what's going on in my head or what led to all this. They came to Ames in the middle of the night when DPS called them. They have come back to Nevada for all my hearings, even the ones I didn't have to be at. They take off work. They've been real good about calling and e-mailing and letting me know they don't hate me.

DF: What would you want to tell the ISU community, particularly the black community, to convince them you aren't racist?

KR: It's like I don't know what to say. I went to Iowa City to visit some friends who are in school there. One of my friends who I have known forever has this friend who I've never met before who happens to be black. And he was at a party with us one night and he kept calling me a bitch all night and swearing at me and flipping me off and I had no idea what was going on. My boyfriend didn't like that too much. It was a big fiasco, but later I found out that he had a friend here who had gotten some shit for the whole thing. I wish he would have told me why he was upset because I would have apologized or do whatever anybody wants to let them know I didn't mean for this to end up like that. I would do whatever anyone would want me to do within reason. I am not going to commit suicide to make it right or anything like that. I have apologized to a lot of people and that doesn't bother me at all because I am sorry. I wish I could take it all back or make everyone understand or I wish I would have said the guy was white. It's such a mess, and I don't know what I can say or is there anything that I can say at this point. I wish people would at least be willing to think that I might be sorry. I know I have no credibility now, which is obviously directly related to this, so anything I say needs proof to be worth anything. I can't prove anything. I am not gonna call up all my black friends and have them call everybody in Ames and say, "She is not a racist." That doesn't make sense. I will apologize forever. I don't know what else I can do. I have to get up and look at myself in the mirror in the morning and that is not easy to do, but they don't know that. They don't know that I can't go to sleep at night because I think about what I did and all the conse-

quences it had, not just for me, but for everybody. It's like if they were in my head for a day, they'd know, but I can't split my head open and put it up on a billboard for them to see. So it's hard to get across.

DF: A lot of the stuff, I'll admit ... the community overhyped it, to me.

KR: I don't want to take any of the blame off myself because this is all my fault. But it seems like there were a lot of people who perpetuated it and made it worse than it had to be. Whether it be the *Daily* or DPS or my sorority. Like DPS promised my parents that night that they weren't going to press charges, and they knew it wasn't true before they ever told the *Daily*. So, it's like they had no reason to be putting it in the paper.

DF: Could it have been just left out of everything?

KR: Exactly. And so that's a little bizarre because it got so much from so many directions. But still, I know it comes down to the fact that had I not said it that it wouldn't have been an issue. I'm not trying to give the responsibility to somebody else. There was a lot of the power of the media involved in there I suppose. Interesting the *Daily* chose to mention I was in a sorority and all this and that, but they didn't say, "Oh, she wrote for us for a year." It's interesting what the media chooses to mention and not [mention].

DF: You said in the e-mail "you would be trying to make amends throughout your life." What do you plan to do in the immediate future to make amends? What do you plan to do in the long term?

KR: It's like I have 100 hours of community service that I have to report. So, I'll do my community service and do that for the city, but it's like ... I want ... I don't know exactly what to. That's something I think about a lot. I don't know how to go make this up to people, but it's like I don't want ... I got a letter that wasn't signed from somebody sealed with a God sticker. It was kind of amusing to me. An anonymous letter about how horrible I am.

DF: Wow. With a God sticker?

KR: Yeah with a God sticker, which is just a little bit of irony for ya'. About how I was unsympathetic to sexual assault victims and how I was creating this horrible thing and all this. I feel bad, but I am not gonna' lose a lot of sleep over that particular letter because if they won't sign it and let me send her an apology, then there's a lot else I can do.

DF: I am sure since you were a journalism major, you are aware of the ethics code. How do you feel about your journalistic career at this point?

KR: It made me more sure that I don't really want to be a professional journalist because it's like I don't know how I would have been in this situation, on the other end of it if I was the one at the paper and somebody else. I'm glad I wasn't in that situation. It does make it harder for the law school thing. Since I have a criminal record now, I could have trouble either getting into law school or getting into the bar to practice law.

DF: So you can't take the bar?

KR: The Iowa Bar can decide that my offense is too great to let me practice law in Iowa. It's not something that goes away even though I got the deferred judgement,

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which means if I complete my probation and do all the stuff they want me to do, I have a chance of it not showing up as a conviction. But then, it's still there that I was charged. It will always be there, and I will deal with that forever. Before I was a good student, and I had a perpetual speeding problem. That was my big issue with the law, but I was involved in things and I did a lot of stuff and I did really well in school and on paper I looked really good, but now there's this big black hole thing. I'm not saying that I was really good. I just looked like it on paper. I sounded like a good person and now I have this big kind of, not-so-good stain right in the middle of all of that, and it makes it harder because everything that I'd worked for may be gone. I hope that people don't think that just because I didn't have to go to jail for a year that I don't have any consequences.

DF: Do you think people will try to hang this over your head forever?

KR: I don't know. I hope not, but I don't want to guess what other people are going to do. I know that most of the people that my parents talk to said things about how stuff happens. I've gotten e-mails from people I don't know at Cedar Rapids and Iowa State that say, "We still think that you have a bright future," and all this, but it's people that don't know me, which is kind of bizarre. And I've appreciated that a lot because I've gotten a lot of support from a lot of people, but my friends at the sorority and people who were my best friends, I never talk to. And there's still girls that come over. Some came over for a Super Bowl party last night, but it's like I lost a lot of friends and it was hard here last semester to introduce myself to anybody because it's like, "Do you know that name?" and if so, "What do you think about it?" I've never been ashamed of being me before, but I was and I still am.

DF: Do you feel like at Drake that a lot of people look at you differently? Do you think they even know?

KR: I have not heard anything except one of the advisers in the journalism department let me know that the people at the paper know I'm there, and why I'm there. But I haven't heard from anybody ... I don't talk to anybody. I don't know anybody there. It's really kind of pathetic because I do nothing. I go to class and then I come home, but I haven't had any trouble so far.

DF: How did people from ISU treat you after the incident?

KR: Since my picture was never in the paper here, the only people who knew me were the people who knew my name. To know my name, theoretically means to know who I am, but the people who knew me, knew better than to just take this at face value.

DF: What about classes?

KR: In classes, I didn't really have any trouble. Honestly, I had a lot less than I was afraid I would. I got kicked out of my sorority. I am supposed to say "terminated."

DF: How do you want your future relationships with African-Americans to be?

KR: I want them to be the same as they were before this all started. It's like now I notice what color people are and that bothers me. It's not like I was walking around with my eyes shut before, but it didn't trigger anything in my

head. But now I notice, and it makes me nervous because I don't want anybody to take something I say as offensive because of their color.

DF: Do you feel the report will resonate in ISU history?

KR: No. I think that news gets old. It's already old to a lot of people.

DF: New news comes in.

KR: Exactly and as horrible as it sounds, once Sept. 11th happened, I was out of the paper. I was gone. I'm not happy that thousands of people died or anything like that, but that took the attention off me. Unfortunately, it had to be a much bigger tragedy, but it also put it in perspective. It's like, I hurt feelings and I offended people and I do feel bad about that, but it isn't a terrorist act. I wasn't trying to terrorize the people of Iowa State or anything like that. It kind of made it seem a little sillier to be writing to the editor about a girl telling a story once airplanes were flying into the World Trade Center.

DF: You're going to law school and all of that, where do you see yourself in 15 to 20 years?

KR: I don't know anymore. This whole thing has kind of made me quit looking to the future in a way because everything that seemed to be able to go wrong did. My friends at the house told me and they were there with me, and then they kicked me out. The drum line said, "We're here, we're your friends," and then I got kicked out of that. It came down to where I shouldn't stay at Iowa State anymore. It's like, everything that was important to me, kind of disappeared. It's kind of like get through the day, get through the week because everything ... "OK, this isn't going to happen. This is not going to get any worse." And then it did. I just can't be disappointed if I don't expect to hope for anything.

DF: How has this affected your relationship with your boyfriend?

KR: He got really mad and broke up with me for a weekend after awhile because he hadn't known the truth either. But we've been together for four years, and we're back together now. It was really, really hard for him and I hate having hurt him that much and he loves me.

DF: Has he taken any slack for you?

KR: Yeah, with his friends mostly. Not too much. His parents and his family are like, "What's this?" But his name isn't connected with me in any way unless you know him and know he's with me. So it hasn't been as bad as it could have been I suppose. He asks every day, "What could I have done to stop this?"

DF: I'd like to thank you for your time. I really appreciate it.

KR: Thanks for listening to my side.

DF: There are always two sides to a coin. Or three sides. My side, your side and the truth.

KR: The truth isn't necessarily what happened in the paper. True, I did everything it says I did in the paper. I even said it was a black man. It wasn't true, but I said this story. Yes, that's all true. But there's a lot more truth to it. Truth is, I didn't call DPS. I didn't call the cops. I wasn't the one who reported it in the first place. Truth is, I've paid a lot for this, but I still punish myself more than the legal system ever can.

