

United States Supreme Court and Senate hearings: The time to act is now - Stop Kavanaugh!

Tuesday 2 October 2018, by [MAASS Alan](#), [SCHULTE Elizabeth](#) (Date first published: 1 October 2018).

The Senate hearings on Brett Kavanaugh have transformed U.S. politics. Elizabeth Schulte and Alan Maass look at the fight to come and what our side has to do now.

LAST THURSDAY in Washington, D.C., was a collision of two worlds: Their world of power and arrogant privilege ran head-on into ours — in the person of Dr. Christine Blasey Ford, but with millions standing with her, determined to speak truth to power and win some measure of justice.

And this time, our world stopped them from getting their way, at least temporarily.

Now, we have just days to mobilize in every way we can to show the power of #MeToo and our world. This is no time for waiting and hoping. We have to turn up the pressure on Washington to permanently derail the nomination of a miserable reactionary and sexual assaulter to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Dr. Blasey's testimony was a study in honesty and courage — the polar opposite of the sniveling Brett Kavanaugh and his hyperventilating fellow Republicans. Yet the day ended with Republicans confident that they could ram through Kavanaugh's nomination with a full Senate vote on Tuesday.

But there was another whiplash coming — Republican Sen. Jeff Flake called for a one-week FBI investigation before a full Senate vote, and the Trump White House and GOP leaders were forced to give in.

Before his announcement, Flake was confronted in the Senate Office Building by two sexual assault survivors. When he got in an elevator and refused to answer their questions, one yelled: "Look at me when I'm talking to you. You're telling me that my assault doesn't matter!" [\[1\]](#)

FLAKE'S REQUEST for a delay in voting and the Republicans' capitulation showed that the furious response in solidarity with Blasey and against Kavanaugh could reach into the corridors of power in Washington and force political leaders to change course.

But make no mistake: We still have a fight on our hands.

The Democrats' main strategy in the weeks since Blasey came forward was to demand an FBI investigation, but that's no guarantee that Kavanaugh will go down. Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein told Flake that a one-week investigation is unlikely to "unearth much more than was already known," according to the *New York Times* [\[2\]](#).

The Republicans run a big risk that some evidence will contradict an important element of Kavanaugh's statements and testimony. But anyone who opposes Kavanaugh runs the risk that an

inconclusive report would give wavering Republicans and right-wing Democrats the cover to dismiss the allegations and vote to confirm him.

The worst thing anyone could do is wait and put our faith in the FBI — which isn't exactly known for its solidarity with sexual assault victims and opposition to reactionaries.

We have to organize and agitate and mobilize — in our cities and communities, on campuses, at work — so no one in Washington can pretend that our opposition is part of a liberal “plot” or the work of a disgruntled few.

In New York City, members of the International Socialist Organization, Democratic Socialists of America and other organizations are working together to organize a march on the Yale Club on Monday evening (gather at Madison Square Park at 6 p.m.) [3], with more protests to come later in the week. International Women's Strike has called for a day of action on Thursday, October 4, including a walkout from work and school at 4 p.m. nationwide.

Liberal organizations have unfortunately not responded with plans for demonstrations on the scale that would make the public pressure on Washington unbearable. But we can't wait for them. There have already been protests, speak-outs, marches and pickets in cities around the country. We need to make them bigger.

“It's about time we're heard — and not just heard, but action is taken,” said Susan Foley in an impromptu speech during a protest outside Republican Sen. Susan Collins' office in Portland, Maine [4].

“I think every woman has met a Kavanaugh. Every woman has met one of these Kavanaughs — in high school, in college, in business. It has affected all of our lives — and you know what: We're fucking fed up with it!”

THE KAVANAUGH hearing last week and the public response speaks volumes about the political earthquake that is being felt throughout American society.

Last Thursday, millions of people stopped everything to watch Christine Blasey Ford tell her story about being sexually assaulted by Kavanaugh when she was 15 years old. Offices went silent as co-workers watched their computers to hear Ford describe the ordeal. Radios were tuned to the testimony.

We listened as Blasey described being pushed into a bedroom, where Kavanaugh pinned her down, grinded into her and tried to take off her clothes.

“I tried to yell for help,” Blasey said. “When I did, Brett put his hand over my mouth to stop me from screaming. This was what terrified me the most, and has had the most lasting impact on my life. It was hard for me to breathe, and I thought that Brett was accidentally going to kill me.”

We listened to Blasey answer the question from Sen. Patrick Leahy: “What is the strongest memory you have?...Something that you cannot forget?”

Her response: “Indelible in the hippocampus is the laughter. The uproarious laughter between the two, and their having fun at my expense.”

Unlike the Anita Hill hearings 27 years ago [5], senators made sure to appear respectful of Blasey's difficult choice to appear before the committee — which meant that the all-white male Republicans sat silent while a female prosecutor asked questions on their behalf.

Survivors of sexual assault, their friends, their family members, their supporters — we all listened to Blasey, while hoping that she could somehow know we were standing strong with her.

Everyone around the country was watching — but not Brett Kavanaugh. He said as much during questioning: “I was preparing mine,” he said.

During his hours of testimony, Kavanaugh talked about his respectable upbringing, going to church, his love of beer and hanging out with his friends, being at the top of his class, how hard he worked.

Maybe even Kavanaugh — who looks familiar if you’ve ever met someone with so much privilege and arrogance that they put their own personal success above even the most minor act of respect toward other human beings — knew that he couldn’t directly attack Blasey like Anita Hill was.

So he went after what he called the “left,” crying and yelling at the same time about how he was the victim of a Democratic Party plot.

“This whole two-week effort has been a calculated and orchestrated political hit,” he fumed, “fueled with apparent pent-up anger about President Trump and the 2016 election, fear that has been unfairly stoked about my judicial record, revenge on behalf of the Clintons and millions of dollars in money from outside left-wing opposition groups.”

Taking his turn, Sen. Lindsey Graham told Kavanaugh, “I cannot imagine what you and your family have gone through,” before turning to the Democrats and ranting: “Boy, y’all want power. God, I hope you never get it. I hope the American people can see through this sham.”

In other words, the Republicans are so intent on attacking the Democrats and pushing through their reactionary agenda that they’re convinced the real battle isn’t about whether their Supreme Court nominee may have tried to rape someone, but about defending themselves against the “left.”

A GOOD portion of the media “analysis” followed this line: Equal sympathy for the “ordeals” both Blasey and Kavanaugh suffered through, then on to speculating about which of the two competing teams did well and advanced their cause. Naturally, there was plenty of “analysis” about which party would benefit in the midterm elections.

But all of this comes off as cynical and callous after the hearings last Thursday, when millions of people watched a woman break the silence about sexual assault, even when that meant confronting some of the most powerful men and women in the world.

That goes far beyond the usual Democratic and Republican wrangles in Washington, and it can’t possibly be confined inside a ballot box.

Blasey’s testimony is part of a defiant resistance that was obvious with the massive Women’s Marches the day after a sexual harasser took the White House, and also the #MeToo movement, through which sexual assault survivors have made their voices heard.

As the hearing was taking place last Thursday, there was a mobilization of hundreds of people outside the Capitol building, including many survivors of sexual assault. Chants of “We believed Anita then, we believe Christine now” and “We believe survivors” rang out.

This spirit was echoed at small protests around the country — like Madison, Wisconsin, where a protest on the University of Wisconsin campus gained strength and marched through the city [6]. “Regardless of what happens with Brett Kavanaugh in the Supreme Court, we won’t suffer abusers in our community,” said Dayna Long. “They’re not going to operate with impunity here.”

#MeToo has had a huge impact on masses of people, with women speaking out, and others hearing their stories and learning valuable lessons — not just coming to grips with the enormity of the problem, but its deep roots in American society.

More people are coming to realize that this goes beyond listening to survivors, as important as that is. It is necessary to build a real resistance against the Trumps and the Kavanaughs and the Grahams who try to push us back.

As one of the women who cornered Jeff Flake in an elevator said: “I was sexually assaulted and nobody believed me. I didn’t tell anyone, and you’re telling all women that they don’t matter, that they should just stay quiet because if they tell you what happened to them you are going to ignore them.”

If they won’t take sexual assault seriously, we’ll show them how to do it.

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Khadija Mehter and Michael Shallal contributed to this article.

P.S.

- October 1, 2018: <https://socialistworker.org/2018/10/01/the-time-to-act-is-now-stop-kavanaugh>

Footnotes

- [1] <https://www.commondreams.org/news/2018/09/28/look-me-when-im-talking-you-sexual-assault-survivors-furious-sen-jeff-flake-after>
- [2] <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/28/us/politics/jeff-flake-kavanaugh-confirmation.html>
- [3] <https://www.facebook.com/events/248425645869370/>
- [4] <https://www.commondreams.org/news/2018/09/28/irreverent-sexual-assault-survivors-imromptu-speech-against-kavanaugh-outside-susan>
- [5] <http://socialistworker.org/2018/09/27/we-still-believe-anita-hill-lessons-of-the-backlash>
- [6] <https://badgerherald.com/news/2018/09/29/blame-the-system-not-the-victim-uw-students-marc-h-in-protest-of-kavanaugh-nomination/>