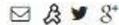


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# The Columbia Student Who's Carrying A Mattress Until Her Alleged Rapist Leaves Campus Says She's Getting A Ton Of Support



PETER JACOBS



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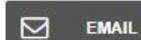
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*Andrew Burton/Getty Images*

Emma Sulkowicz says it's easiest to carry the mattress with four people.

Columbia University senior Emma Sulkowicz has learned that the best way to carry a dorm mattress around campus is using four people — one at each corner.

"I've figured out all the ideal mattress carrying formations, from 1 to 2 to 3 to 4 people carrying it," Sulkowicz told Business Insider in a conversation last week.

Sulkowicz — a visual arts major — [has turned her senior thesis into a performance art piece that blends campus activism and personal expression](#). She has said she will carry the mattress around campus until the male student who she alleges raped her leaves Columbia, either by university action or his own volition.

Sulkowicz says she was raped in her dorm room the first night of her sophomore year at Columbia. Two other women have also said they were raped by the same student, who was found not guilty in all three cases and remains at the school.

Business Insider spoke to Sulkowicz last Friday, a few days into her piece, which is titled "Mattress Performance: Carry That Weight." She described herself as "very sore."

"My neck and shoulders hurt a lot," she added.



*Andrew Burton/Getty Images*

Two strangers help Emma Sulkowicz carry her mattress.

The experience, though, has been amazing, she said. Sulkowicz has seen an incredible amount of support from her student peers — "Students come up to me on campus and introduce themselves," she told us.

"People are coming up me in the dining hall and asking to take pictures of it on their iPhones."

On Wednesday, a group of students organized to help Sulkowicz carry her mattress across Columbia's campus. While she is not allowed to ask for help to carry the mattress under the rules of her performance art piece, she can accept help if it's offered, student newspaper The Columbia Daily Spectator reports.

As one student helper told The Spectator, "I think there's been a general feeling from people among both schools that, there's a great sense of support for Emma and other survivors and this would be great for people to get involved on a daily basis, and just show solidarity, and give Emma and other survivors support."

Professors, as well, have been supportive, although Sulkowicz says she has made an effort not to disrupt her classes.

"I try to get to the classroom early, so I can sort of stick it on the side so it doesn't disturb anyone ... I don't want to distract people from their classes," Sulkowicz said.



*Andrew Burton/Getty Images*

Emma Sulkowicz carries her mattress around Columbia's campus.

While a lot of the coverage surrounding "Carry the Weight" has focused on Sulkowicz as a student protester, the visual arts major emphasized that her senior thesis is also a performance art piece.

An article from artnet senior writer Ben Davis [does a fantastic job connecting Sulkowicz to an artistic legacy of "activist consciousness-raising of feminism,"](#) linking the Columbia senior to prominent performance artists such as Marina Abramović and Suzanne Lacy. "I can hardly think of an artwork in recent memory that justifies the belief that art can still help lead a conversation in quite the way Mattress Performance already has," Davis writes.

"This was the coolest article about me," Sulkowicz told us.



**Emma Sulkowicz**  
Columbia University · 1 Mutual Friend · September 4 at 7:00pm · New York, NY · 🌐

This was the most surreal article for me to read so far; my heart is still pounding.  
<http://news.artnet.com/art-world/columbia-students-striking-mattress-performance-92346>

**Columbia Student's Striking Mattress Performance Builds on Legacy of Activist Performance**  
Columbia art student Emma Sulkowicz's "Mattress Performance" is bringing national attention to the issue of sexual assault on campus.

NEWS.ARTNET.COM

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Amid all of the support from her Columbia classmates and professors, as well as students and activists around the country, the one group Sulkowicz hasn't heard from is the university itself, she said Friday.

"No one has reached out to me, and I'm waiting," Sulkowicz said.

**SEE ALSO: [A Columbia Student Is Carrying Around A Matt](#)**

Read more: <http://www.businessinsider.com/columbia-student-emma-sulkowicz-still-carrying-mattress-around-campus-2014-9#ixzz3D1Dc7mlp>