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Stop the Silence

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Stop the Silence

Abstract

I am tired of the numbers. The statistics. We all know them. One out of every six women are the victims of sexual assault. One out of thirty-three men are victims of sexual assault. Forty-four percent of victims are under the age of eighteen at the time of their assault. The transgender and queer communities are three times as likely to be targeted for sexual assault. But numbers don't carry meaning, they don't carry identity, and they (very quickly) lose their weight and are forgotten. Names mean much more. Stories make an impact.

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, sexual violence, sexual assault, rape

Disciplines

Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Women's Studies

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](#) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

STOP THE SILENCE

April 30, 2014

Trigger Warning: This article contains potentially triggering material related to sexual assault.

I am tired of the numbers. The statistics. We all know them. One out of every six women are the victims of sexual assault. One out of thirty-three men are victims of sexual assault. Forty-four percent of victims are under the age of eighteen at the time of their assault. The transgender and queer communities are three times as likely to be targeted for sexual assault. But numbers don't carry meaning, they don't carry identity, and they (very quickly) lose their weight and are forgotten. Names mean much more. Stories make an impact.

My name is Victoria Reynolds, and I am a survivor of sexual assault. My assault occurred on this campus when I was a freshman. My attacker was a senior and we were close friends. This May will mark two years since my sexual assault—it will mark two years of learning to cope as a survivor, learning to live as a survivor. My sexual assault caused me more problems than I am normally willing to admit. My sleep patterns changed completely. I couldn't sleep until the sun was up, after seven in the morning. My appetite was non-existent, and my family accused me of being anorexic. I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress-disorder (PTSD) the following fall, which culminated in terrifying flashbacks that I had to wait out, sometimes, until morning. I confronted my attacker, and told him that I hadn't been comfortable with what happened that night, that I had not given consent.

His response?

I just wanted to share myself with you.

His response speaks to the culture that we live in today. We all live in a rape culture. This young man did not see anything wrong with his actions—he did not admit to violating my mind, my trust, my body. He did not know the extensive damage he had done to my psyche, to my sense of safety, and to my sense of self-worth.



My goal here is to put away the statistics, and give a face to the issue and stigma surrounding sexual assault. Students at colleges around the country have also chosen to take a new approach towards rape activism—[through the internet](#). Young men and women who have been affected by sexual violence are no longer simply a number, but individual voices of activism spreading their stories through cyberspace. This is the same idea that I have when I open up about my experience.

I want to offer myself as a resource to other survivors of sexual violence, to the men and women who inhabit Gettysburg's campus, and to who all suffer from the byproducts of our rape culture. I've [created a blog](#) to provide a place for survivors of sexual assault to connect to one another, or to anonymously contact me for advice or my experience with surviving sexual assault. I am by no means an expert or a psychologist, but I hope to create a safe place to ask questions about these issues, have in-depth discussions, and hopefully inspire individuals within our community to seek out help to cope in surviving their sexual assault. It would be impossible for me to articulate all the advice I want to give, all the change I want to make, into a one-thousand word article, however, it is possible to attempt to break the silence surrounding sexual assault.

Silence normalizes sexual assault. If we band together to provide a community for the individuals who have been damaged by rape culture and sexual assault, we will make a difference. We will make this world a better and a more safe place.

One thing is for certain; I do not intend to be quiet ever again.

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Contributing Writer

<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2014/04/30/stop-the-silence-2/>