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## Fearless: Sexual Assault Survivors

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# Fearless: Sexual Assault Survivors

## **Abstract**

### **TRIGGER WARNING!**

Raped, abused, molested, assaulted. Every other day on this campus.

Grabbed, touched, hit, down. Not a person. Skirt going down, shirt coming up.

Led behind locked doors, poured another drink.

“Not sure if it counted as assault.”

Every. other. day. [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, sexuality, gender, sexual assault, alcohol, consent, rape, college

## **Disciplines**

Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Gender and Sexuality

## **Comments**

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](http://www.gettysburg.edu) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](http://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

## FEARLESS: SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS

November 8, 2013

### TRIGGER WARNING!

Raped, abused, molested, assaulted. Every other day on this campus.

Grabbed, touched, hit, down. Not a person. Skirt going down, shirt coming up.

Led behind locked doors, poured another drink.

"Not sure if it counted as assault."

Every. other. day.

Too much alcohol, too much cleavage, too much, too much, too much.

Not enough:

"Her eyes said she was lonely."

"Her eyes said she wanted it."

"He didn't say no."

"With the way she was dancing and what she was wearing, no doubt it was fine."

("It" being rape. "It" being assault. "It" being dehumanizing, objectifying, and degrading. "It" being the theft of life, security, identity, and rights. "It" being absolutely, inherently, unconditionally wrong. "It" being a crime.)

This week we honor the fearful and the fearless, the outspoken and the still voiceless—the hundreds of students on this campus who silently relive their stories of assault or rape or abuse or molestation in the middle of Servo or a final exam. Who hid in their rooms for days after "it" happened. Who have never told their parents. Never told their friends. Who have



to see the one who did “it” every day in class. Who are anonymously sharing their stories this week as part of the [14 Days to End Sexual Violence](#) campaign.

This awareness-spreading, story-telling, emotion-releasing opportunity to anonymously share an experience of assault is for those who “wore the wrong thing” or “danced the wrong way” or “didn’t say no with their words”—as if those were good enough excuses to justify carelessness, malice, self-interest, and evil. Because “it” *is* evil.

This is for those who had something thrown into their drink. Who thought it couldn’t happen to someone like him. Who thought it wouldn’t happen to someone like her. Who thought he was a friend. Who “should have known better.” Whose friends were too drunk or too scared or too far away to say something, to stop “it,” to grab an arm and take them home. Whose friends said “She’s a girl—she couldn’t have done that to you.”

It happened in Paul Hall. It happened at Ice House. It happened at home over break. It happened after too many drinks. It happened when you weren’t drinking at all. It happened while you were abroad. It happened in your bed. It happened in someone else’s bed. When she had her period. When he pushed him into a stall. When she had a test the next day. When he was a kid. When she was wearing a sequined skirt. When she was wearing sweatpants. When they were both too drunk to decide or think or consent. When they’d been together for months but he wasn’t ready. When she wasn’t ready. When no one asked. When there was no consent.

We say there are gray areas when it comes to consent. We say, “You can’t always know when it’s consensual or not.” We say, “Asking kills the moment”—as if that moment of orgasm or desire or power or “love” (if you can even sickeningly call it that) outweighs the importance, value, opinion, and voice of the person, human, *soul* on the other end of it. We say, “It didn’t mean anything.”

Consent doesn’t kill the moment—it makes one. It makes an exchange of respect. Consent means commitment to that person’s wellbeing, pleasure, and care (if only for that night). Consent means you are concerned about that person as a person, and not just what he or she means sexually to you. Consent is recognizing and valuing someone else’s identity as his or her own distinct person with the right to say “Yes” and the right to say “No.” Consent means you’re not just doing it for you. It means you’re taking an act that’s communal by nature and treating it as if it’s communal. It means that you recognize that there are two distinct, beautiful minds and bodies on each end of the interaction. It means that you elevate the level of sex to something important, something valuable, something that isn’t for power or status or a tally sheet. Consent means no more people being pushed into rooms, into stalls, onto floors—pinned down. No more “I know you want it,” or “It’ll be quick,” or “This means that I love you.”

Because sometimes things are black and white. Sometimes there is absolute truth. An absolute right and an absolute wrong. A good and an evil. And every time, “it” is an evil.

The stories we’ll hear these 14 Days to End Sexual Violence won’t represent all of you on campus who have ached over this kind of deep-seated hurt—won’t represent all your pain, all your suffering, all your suffocating questioning, worry, and fear. But for those of you who do speak out and share your stories, know that you are not alone. Know that you represent the otherwise voiceless. And know that we hear you. We hear your experiences, believe your stories, and grieve with you. We think you are brave and courageous; maybe broken and struggling, but fighting and strong. We think you need to be listened to. We think your stories are worth telling—that they need to be told. We think you are blameless.

*We think you are fearless.*

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<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2013/11/08/fearless-sexual-assault-survivors/>