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I Was Assaulted

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I Was Assaulted

Abstract

TRIGGER WARNING: Contains content about sexual assault

My first assault happened when I was 18. It was the summer after high school and I was at my boyfriend's graduation party. None of us had much experience drinking and that night my boyfriend, at the time, drank more than he should have. We hadn't been dating very long; we were still getting to know each other. When the party started to die down we decided to sneak into the basement for some alone time. At first I was unsure what to make of that night. Even though it hurt and I told him to stop I didn't know if I could define what happened as an assault because he only penetrated me with his fingers. At the time I thought the definition of rape was exclusive to the penetration of a woman's vagina by a man's penis without her consent.

[*excerpt*]

Keywords

Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, Surge, Surge Gettysburg, #NotOkay, 14 days to end sexual violence, consent, Law & Order, Rape, relationships, Sexual Assault, Sexual Violence, violence

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement | Education

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](https://cupola.gettysburg.edu) 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

I WAS ASSAULTED

October 16, 2016



TRIGGER WARNING: Contains content about sexual assault

My first assault happened when I was 18. It was the summer after high school and I was at my boyfriend's graduation party. None of us had much experience drinking and that night my boyfriend, at the time, drank more than he should have. We hadn't been dating very long; we were still getting to know each other. When the party started to die down we decided to sneak into the basement for some

alone time. At first I was unsure what to make of that night. Even though it hurt and I told him to stop I didn't know if I could define what happened as an assault because he only penetrated me with his fingers. At the time I thought the definition of rape was exclusive to the penetration of a woman's vagina by a man's penis without her consent.

My second assault happened when I was 19 and a sophomore here at Gettysburg College. I was hanging out with a guy I had hooked up with before. I told him the whole night I wasn't going to have sex, and it seemed like he respected that. So when we were messing around in his house and I heard him rip open a condom and slip it over himself, I froze. My instincts screamed at me to speak and adrenaline coursed through my veins, but I was unable to move a muscle. It felt like everything was in slow motion, that the whole thing was surreal. *This is just a bad dream*, my "rational" mind was saying, *you'll wake up soon*. This couldn't be real, I thought. After all, I had communicated with him the entire night. I had told him I didn't want to have sex, so how could this actually be happening? These thoughts just kept repeating in my head, like I was removed from the situation. The next thing I knew, I was brought back to reality when he was inside me. And in that moment any illusion of this being a dream was shattered. I was then able to find my voice and told him I wanted him to stop, and he did. I was once again confused about whether or not this was an assault. I didn't say no right before he entered me, he stopped when I asked him to, and I wasn't physically hurt.

My most recent assault happened when I was 20. It was just a few weeks ago. This time was different; I don't remember all the details of that night and I do not know who my perpetrator was. I was at a frat that I often go to and although I was drinking a bit more than I usually do, I was having fun and didn't see any harm in indulging a little. It seemed no different than any other Friday night. I was doing the same thing with the same people at the same place. I was dancing and a guy approached me. He asked if he could dance with me. I agreed. We danced

for a bit and then we left the frat. The night becomes fragmented from there. I kind of remember walking to my dorm with him and going to my room and I vaguely remember making out and pulling out condoms. But when I try to remember what happened next it's like I'm trying to watch a film with some of the scenes cut out. I do remember gaining consciousness when he was inside me. I wanted it to be over, but instead I simply asked him if he was done. He said yeah and moved off of me. I think he got dressed and left at this point, but I'm not sure. I vacillated on whether or not this was an assault because I didn't explicitly say no or to stop, I was the one who originally pulled out the condoms, and I don't even know what exactly happened.

In the media, rape is often portrayed as an exceptionally violent crime committed by a sadistic individual, a psychopath who abuses another. These portrayals create a disconnect between how we perceive assault and the reality of sexual violence. As a result, even though now I definitively say that these were assaults, I have struggled with defining them as such. This is largely because I did not feel as if they were worthy of being called assaults. I did not experience years of abuse or torment. I do not have physical scars that remind me of those nights. I do not even consider these incidents to be the worst things that have ever happened to me.

But they were assaults.

I know this because in each instance sexual contact occurred without my explicit consent. Even with a [clear definition](#) of what an assault is, it can be difficult in the moment to translate this to a personal experience that is so much more complicated.

Assaults are not always like the heinous crimes we see on Law & Order. And just because the trauma and violence of these acts do not always result in physical scars does not make them less real. Each assault has affected me. I've had flashbacks that remind me of painful experiences. I've gone over these events countless times imagining what I should or could have done differently. I've had a panic attack because of the loss of control and power I experienced.

I hope my stories have helped debunk some of the myths around sexual assault. It is still assault whether or not you knew your perpetrator. It is still assault even if the penetration was with fingers. It is still assault even if you weren't physically injured. It is still assault even if you didn't explicitly say no. It is still assault even if when you finally said stop, they did. It is still assault even if you pulled out condoms and then became incapable of consent. It is still assault even if you don't know exactly what happened. It took time after each instance to seek the help and support I needed because I convinced myself these were not really assaults. I struggled greatly with my experiences because I had not heard of stories comparable to mine, so I felt they were invalid.

But they were assaults and they are valid and they are [#NotOkay](#).

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This post is written anonymously not out of shame, but to protect my identity. To contact me, email surgegettysburg@gmail.com.

<https://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2016/10/16/i-was-assaulted/>