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## You Know One of Us

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*Gettysburg College*

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## You Know One of Us

### Abstract

*\*\*Trigger warning: sexual assault*

I am afraid of my bed.

I am also afraid of heather blue shirts. Men's voices make me jump. I am constantly scanning crowds, always looking for the closest exit. I sit with my back to the wall. I no longer eat at Servo for lunch or dinner, or walk down a specific pathway as a shortcut home. Instead, I take the long way through the middle of campus to get back to my room. If I see someone with the same haircut or wearing similar clothes, I start to tremble. Unexpected touches from male friends, acquaintances, and strangers make me jump away in fear. [excerpt]

### Keywords

Gettysburg College, Greek Life, Sexual Assault, Students Against Sexual Assault

### Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement

### Comments

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

## YOU KNOW ONE OF US

February 18, 2020

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I was raped on September 28th, 2019. I reported it to Gettysburg College on October 3rd, and a campus safety alert was sent out shortly after I left the Title IX office. Yes, that one was about me. Countless meetings with college officials and therapy appointments filled up my first semester of sophomore year. I could barely focus in class and often neglected to take notes, drawing the attention of worried professors. Slowly, I began to tell my friends and family about what had happened to me.

The hearing was held on January 28th, five months to the day of my rape. I faced the panel clutching the hand of my best friend. Two days later, the decision came back to me in an email: he was not found responsible.

I let out a guttural wail as soon as I read the word "not." I started to sob uncontrollably, my cries echoing off the walls. My shaking hands searched for something to grasp. I was falling down a hole, the walls closing in. Something within me just broke, died. I was in mourning. I felt betrayed and heartbroken and terrified and confused. Throughout the entire process, I felt like I was respected by the college. I left the hearing relieved, hopeful even. They had to believe me. After all, I had four screenshots, two witnesses, and my own word. Apparently it wasn't enough. It felt like a cruel trick.

After a trusted friend walked me to a crisis counseling appointment, I collapsed on my best friend's bed. She stroked my hair and held me close. I stared at the wall, feeling empty. Exhausted. I tried to focus my cloudy thoughts, trying to form my next step.

I suddenly felt this fire in my eyes, flames from deep within. This anger was not new. It has been a familiar feeling since September, recurring every so often. My therapist has told me anger is a part of the grieving process, commonly experienced by sexual assault survivors. And I have found anger to be one hell of a motivator. Riding this wave, I wrote my appeal in twenty minutes. I knew I had to think like a lawyer, I had to be my own advocate. I even quoted the Gettysburg Sexual Misconduct Policy. If they wanted facts, I'd give them facts.

When the system failed me, I had people to support me. It started with my best friend. I texted her soon after he had left my room. She spent the night with me. The next morning over breakfast, I told her I just wanted to move on and forget. She gently reminded me that's easier said than done, and urged me to go see a counselor at the health center. She also asked me if I wanted to go to a SASA (Students Against Sexual Assault) meeting with her. I said yes, and I met others who shared their own experiences. I now go to every meeting.

Whenever I share my story, more often than not I would hear someone say: "Something like that happened to me too." "I was raped last year." "That happened to my friend." I wrote down a list of all the names I can think of. Right now, I am at nineteen names. On this campus. While I am exhausted, I keep adding to it. You know one of us.

This should not be normal.

A required part of first-year orientation is sexual assault education. There is presentation after presentation of bystander awareness, examples of "green-dot" behavior, imagined scenarios where students can pretend to be the hero. While the College does attempt to address sexual assault, their emphasis is woefully misplaced. The impressive martial-arts moves I learned in that self-defense workshop were useless, as I could not move or speak while I was being assaulted.

One of my close friends is a brother of a fraternity that takes part in the Interfraternity Council's annual Not In My House event, which is meant to educate fraternity men on issues of sexual assault. My friend told me that he was frustrated and disappointed after the event, as most of the attendees did not seem to care about the topic of sexual assault and they had complained of wasting precious time. He also told me that the presentation seemed performative, with an emphasis placed on earning plaques and checking off boxes. Whenever I pass by the fraternity house where I met my rapist, I cannot help but chuckle at the "Not In My House" flag flying on their flagpole. Irony.

As Professor Hancock wrote in his [poignant opinion piece](#) for *The Gettysburgian*, we can do better. We must do better. If we as a campus community are serious about preventing sexual assault, we must hold both individuals and organizations accountable for their actions. As a starting point, we must have this conversation. Yes, I know it is uncomfortable. I know it is difficult. I know you feel like you don't know what to say. Embrace that. Because this conversation is necessary if we want change to happen on this campus.

As for me, my appeal is going to move forward. Whatever the final decision is, I know I have countless people who support me. I will keep speaking out. And I will keep fighting.

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