



THE LIBERATOR MAGAZINE



June 10, 2019
The Liberator Magazine
Student Life, The Challenge Issue (Spring 2019)
libfeatured
No comments

Piecing Me Together



Written by Anonymous.

Graphic by Emma Robinson.

Originally published as part of the Spring 2019 “Challenge” Issue.

–

****Content Warning: Sexual Assault****

I don't like to be figured out. I wasn't one to easily confide my personal life in others. I would occasionally share a secret with a friend but never the same one twice. I would give one friend one puzzle piece and give another friend an entirely different piece, never wanting to give all of myself away to any one person. Like the ocean waves pulling footprints in the sand into the great blue depths, I ghosted through life. I made myself neutral in every situation, never unlikable but not wanting to exude charisma either. At family get-togethers, I would cling to the comfort of corners where I could avoid questioning. I was afraid of something, but at the time, I didn't know what it was. I know now– I was afraid of being misunderstood or disliked. I carried this timidness like a weight on my shoulders, bringing it with me to school, in public, and everywhere but home. I handled all of my life experiences like this, the good, the bad, and the ugly...triumphant and traumatic. The feeling was suffocating, like a rock trying to drag me down to the bottom of the river.

For years, I questioned the validity of my sexual assault, in stern denial. When it happened, it was taboo to talk about. I was only a freshman in high school when it happened. “They're going to judge me. They're going to call me every demeaning name in the book. They're not going to believe me.” I reasoned with myself, trying anything to prevent myself from feeling. No matter what I came up with, all of my justifications put me at fault. I didn't give in to my demons, but I didn't confront them either; I kept them at bay...kept them neutral. Every survivor handles their stories and copes with the repercussions of their assault in their own way. My way was to block it out and make the details fuzzy. It was my unspoken truth for the rest of high school.

When I was writing my commencement speech for graduation, I wrote around five drafts. With every revision, I dug myself deeper into memories that I didn't want to

relieve. A close friend noticed the struggle I was having and pulled me aside one day. She had known me since I was a freshman, so she knew when something was off. After much coercing, I finally relented, and I told her everything leading up to senior year. She was cautiously quiet at first, her eyes sympathetic, yet distant. Although she was looking at me, she was looking beyond me, like something was triggered within her. In all my years of knowing her, I had never seen her so stoic. She broke the silence first. “Hey...I have a secret too.” In that moment, I knew that we were in it together. She told me her story, and we sat there in some sort of daze. Before we parted ways, she left me with a few words: “Sweetie, be a survivor....not a victim; be that and write that.” With those words, I went home and wrote. My mom walked into my room later that evening to see how I was doing, and that was when I told her my story too. She knew the boy; she was angry. I didn’t know at who but she was. She took solace to herself for the rest of the day. Least to say, I didn’t sleep that night. The day of graduation, I finally got my speech right. Through my words, I found acceptance in what happened. When I saw my graduating class for the last time, I left them with a message of perseverance in the face of adversity. I walked the stage in peace that day, a feeling I had long forgotten existed.

I remember the day I saw the Young Conservatives of Texas (YCT) supporting the then-candidate for Supreme Court Justice, Brett Kavanaugh. They shouted phrases such as: “Justice for Kavanaugh,” and wrote them on posters. While YCT claims no foul play in the demonstration, the result was nevertheless triggering. It hit me after my sociology class when I approached the table; the posters were provocative and polarizing, just as YCT chooses to be. As we walked towards them, the protestors attempted to agitate my friend and I- encouraging us to engage. As my friend photographed them, they offered me three words: “Change my mind.” When those words registered, I went numb for a moment. Whatever their justification was, whether it was stirring the pot or taking a stance, is not the point. What resonated with me were those three words: “Change my mind.” The phrase bounced around in my head repeating in a never-ending loop.

A week later, there was a different chant ringing in my head– “We believe survivors.” Despite the pounding rain, counter-protestors stood firm on the Speedway, speaking clear as day– “We believe survivors. We believe survivors.” Hand in hand and armed with posters, students stood alongside survivors to send a simple message– “We hear you.” I felt heard. I once felt like an impression in the sand, constantly being silenced by the waves. “*We believe survivors.*” Now, times are changing, and the tide is turning. I was once neutral towards my experience, choosing demurity over boldness. Today, I realize that coming to terms with what happened has been one of my most significant steps towards personal growth, and one day, I may be able to help others like my friend helped me. While I refuse to be defined by it, I accept that my assault, and the struggles that resulted from it, are relevant puzzle pieces in my journey as I continue to piece myself together.



Posted by:
[The Liberator Magazine](#)

[Previous Post](#)

[Next Post](#)

Leave a Reply

Enter your comment here...

The Liberator Magazine is the official publication of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Austin . Don't forget to follow us on:



[Website Powered by WordPress.com.](#)