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**#MeToo: Personal Accounts of Sexual Violence on Facebook  
Analyzing Individual Stories to Reveal Themes About Gender,  
Power, and Intersectional Factors**

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Rochester Institute of Technology

School of Communication

College of Liberal Arts

#MeToo: Personal Accounts of Sexual Violence on Facebook

Analyzing Individual Stories to Reveal Themes About Gender, Power, and Intersectional Factors

by

Lauren DePoint

*A Thesis* submitted

in partial Fulfillment of the Master of Science Degree

in Communication & Media Technologies

Degree awarded:

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The members of the Committee approve the thesis of

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#MeToo: Personal Accounts of Sexual Violence on Facebook

Analyzing Individual Stories to Reveal Themes About Gender, Power, and Intersectional Factors

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School of Communication

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Abstract

This study examines the types of narratives constructed about experiences with sexual violence shared in Facebook posts using the hashtag #MeToo. Feminist and intersectional theories were used to contextualize a textual analysis of 61 public posts to explore how individuals were presenting their experiences for a mass audience online in the absence of traditional gatekeepers. Most of the posts featured graphic details, strong emotion, and patterns of internalized misogyny. Stories shared revealed troubling power dynamics involving disability, race, and gender. Intersectional groups are underrepresented in online spaces, indicating a problematic absence of these individuals within online movements like #MeToo that address sexual violence.

*Keywords:* #MeToo, social media, sexual violence, intersectionality, feminist theory

## #MeToo: Personal Accounts of Sexual Violence on Facebook

## Analyzing Individual Stories to Reveal Themes About Gender, Power, and Intersectional Factors

In October 2017, the hashtag #MeToo began to appear on the social media platforms of Twitter and Facebook. While originally intended to raise awareness about the scale of the issue specifically within the entertainment industry (Farrow, 2017), users on social media expanded the concept to include other areas of their lives as well (Gluckman, Read, & Mangan, 2017). As a result, the #MeToo hashtag became a part of an explosion of personalized posts, often accompanied by individual stories of sexual violence, wherein users disclosed their experiences with varying levels of detail. The magnitude of new content revolving around the issue of sexual assault sparked mainstream media attention and revived the long-standing discussion on how to deal with the issue of sexual assault offline as well as online (Blanding, 2017; Lykke, 2016; Salter, 2013). The reframing of the issue of sexual assault in the public eye warrants research about the nature of sexual assaults stories being shared on social media.

Research on how individuals share their stories, particularly those having to do with sensitive personal issues on social media, will aid in understanding how individuals use language and certain identifiers to frame themselves and their experiences with sexual violence. Previous studies focusing on analysis of sexual assault experiences have been limited to media coverage and cinematic representations (Cuklanz, 2000; Franiuk, Seefelt, Cephess, & Vandello, J, 2008; Meyers, 1994; North, 2009; Pennington & Birthisel, 2016; Tuchman, Daniels, & Benét, 1978). This type of coverage typically involves victim blaming, which further stigmatizes the sharing of such experiences, decreasing trust of journalists and results in “hiding” behaviors (Blanding, 2017; Koelsch, 2014). Digital platforms, namely social media, have given individuals a space to share their stories without the filter of journalism (Andalibi, Haimson, De Choudhury, & Forte,

2016; Lykke, 2016). Trends such as the hashtag #MeToo have eliminated gatekeepers and encouraged sharing of stories about sexual violence by creating a space for conversation online. Users have utilized the digital space of social media to share narratives about themselves and their experiences (Chen, 2017).

Another problem this research sought to address is the perceived inclusivity of social media. There is a common assumption that everyone has access to the internet and are using social media on a regular basis. However, this claim has no basis in factual evidence and is dramatically inflated (Gorski, 2003; Lykke, 2016). In 2015, a national survey of computer and internet use found that only 75% of households had access to the internet, dependent on individual factors such as race, class, education level, and geographic location (United States Census Bureau, 2017). While overall participation on social media networks has increased (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010), the groups of non-users are often left out of the conversation regarding overarching social issues. The assumption of complete connectivity fails to include individuals within disadvantaged groups such as the disabled and impoverished. Research on online communities also neglects to consider intersectional positions of individuals, a gap that exists particularly in online spaces (Drummond & Camera, 2014; Latina & Docherty, 2014; Schradie, 2012) and leads to exclusion of particular groups from conversation on larger social issues of power distribution. This research furthers the discussion on ableism and intersectional effects on communication as reinforcement of heteronormative and patriarchal norms in the stories published using the hashtag #MeToo.

Throughout the course of this research, user generated content written within the #MeToo movement was analyzed textually. Posts on Facebook using the hashtag were collected through a manual search of the social media platform using the phrase “Me Too” and “MeToo.” The study



examined public posts on Facebook that were tagged #MeToo and focused on stories of sexual violence experiences. Patterns within the narratives about experience with sexual violence were documented and analyzed, including any demographic factors that were disclosed in the posts themselves. Textual analysis was used to uncover patterns in the #MeToo stories shared on Facebook during the months of October, November, and December of 2017, which is when the movement gained its initial traction on social media.

### **Feminist Theory**

The term “feminism” has been historically evolutionary in nature. Wood (2017) describes the feminist movement’s division into waves, the first being the women’s rights movement that was spearheaded by memorable figures such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Second wave feminists, active through the 1960s, were driven into action by concerns regarding reproductive rights and are referred to as the “women’s liberation movement.” Some of the feminist groups active during this time were more radical than others, but a sole proponent of this movement was the presence of women in physical spaces and frequent organizing of public events to advocate for change. Feminism has been critiqued extensively and regularly for lacking inclusivity, starting with those who participated in and witnessed the activities undertaken by the second wave of the feminist movement to modern discussion (Wood, 2017).

When discussing issues related to inequality, feminist theory analyzes phenomena within the social sciences, including communication, with specific focus on gender issues. Feminist theorists examine the nature of gender inequality to identify dynamics affected by gender such as social roles and individual experiences. In sum, feminist theory is used in larger conversations regarding power and the structure of gender within power, typically promoting justice in terms of gender inequality (Cuklanz, 2016).

Feminist theory made its appearance in scholarly literature in the 1970s. During what could be considered the end of second wave feminism, an in-depth rhetorical analysis of the women's liberation movement began a discussion about the motivations that drove feminist goals to challenge long standing social structures (Campbell, 1973). Media studies involving power dynamics and gender were being conducted towards the end of the decade. Tuchman, Daniels, & Benét (1978) surveyed mass media channels of the age (television, print newspapers, and magazines) and argued that women were "symbolically annihilated" as they were portrayed as stereotypes or continuously ignored. Much of the research regarding women and media focused around underrepresentation and misrepresentations of women and their behaviors in mainstream media channels (Benedict, 1993).

The term "intersectionality" was coined as a response to the "whiteness" of feminism by Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, a black feminist scholar who asserted that the various components of humanity (race, age, sexual orientation, gender, etc.) do not operate independently of one another (Crenshaw, 1989). An intersectional approach to feminist discourse was furthered by the writings of Patricia Collins (2009). Mainstream third wave feminism's focus on intersectionality set it apart from previous waves; the movement aimed to include women of "different ethnicities, abilities, and disabilities, classes, appearance, sexual orientations, and gender identities" (Wood, 2017, p. 72). Intersectional feminism focuses on inclusion and stresses the importance of holistically addressing oppression with awareness that the aforementioned factors are deeply intertwined in patterns of oppression. Regular criticism of feminism's lack of attention to intersectional factors regarding communication and social issues (i.e. race, sexual orientation, age, class, etc.) encouraged the development of a more inclusive lens within feminist work and feminist thought (Collins, 2009). Aronson (2017) describes how development of a feminist

consciousness within people of color has been hindered by diverse factors that involve issues outside of gender. The exclusivity of second wave feminism to middle class white women has discouraged members of marginalized groups from identifying as feminist.

This focus on intersectionality within contemporary feminist research has been praised, attributing the success of modern feminist theory across disciplines to the expansion of persons included in the feminist worldview (Davis, 2008). Within the last decade, feminist scholars have introduced more research that addresses the exclusive practices of media, from journalism to social media activity (Bivens, 2015; Gilchrist, 2010; Korn & Kneese, 2015; Latina & Dockerty, 2014). Wood (2017) describes how third wave feminism has come to involve both actions of everyday resistance and engagement within media. She argues that online communities, such as those found on social media, are “fertile” grounds for cultivating activism in that organizations become “nimble” and “immediately responsive” (p. 249). Conversations regarding gender issues have taken off in the realm of social media, resurfacing through hashtags and trending news stories. In 2014, the #YesAllWomen hashtag filled the newsfeeds of social media users as women shared why they believed women’s inequality was an issue that deserved attention (Rodino-Colocino, 2014). Stories shared ranged from tales of organizational stigmas to sexual harassment and assault, sparking an outcry for more intersectional inclusion within gender issues as the hashtag trended in the mass media landscape (Rodino-Colocino, 2014). Feminist scholars have called for more intensive studies on new media technologies and the language used within them in order to better understand current events and their implications for structures of power (Bivens, 2015; Griffin, 2017).

The millions of stories shared using the #MeToo hashtag were authored by individuals from a diverse demographic, which requires an intersectional approach to analyze the content.

Feminist theory, particularly the intersectional feminism that has repositioned third wave feminist thought, is useful in examining the issue of sexual assault by analyzing its relationship with gender issues in our patriarchal society. Acts of sexual violence, being both a violation of personal privacy and a crime, confront issues of power and inequality between individuals who are influenced by issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. This research examines the issue of sexual violence through the analysis of stories about sexual violence that were shared using of the hashtag #MeToo on Facebook from October through December of 2017.

### **Background: Sexual Assault and #MeToo**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines sexual violence as “a sexual act that is committed or attempted by another person without freely given consent of the victim or against someone who is unable to consent or refuse” (2014, p. 11). Sexual assault is a type of sexual violence that refers to “any type of sexual contact/behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient” (United States Department of Justice [DOJ], 2017). Assault is often accompanied or anticipated by statements of verbal harassment that are sexual in nature, causing victims great discomfort without physical contact (CDC, 2014, p. 1). On average, over 300,000 people over the age of 12 are victims of sexual assault per year in the United States. The majority of victims are under the age of 30, and are female (Rape, Assault and Incest National Network [RAINN], n.d.-a). Two out of three cases of sexual assault go unreported, due to reasons often related to the victim’s fear of retaliation or lack of confidence in the authority’s ability to help (RAINN, n.d.-b). Victims of sexual violence, especially women, often encounter long term health issues originating from the act of assault, including post-traumatic stress disorder and paranoia (Ullman & Brecklin, 2003). The topic of sexual assault and the widespread

nature of the issue has recently been included in conversations within realms of traditional and digital media.

The hashtag #MeToo first began to circulate on Twitter following the accusations by a number of women in the entertainment industry against Harvey Weinstein, a well-established film executive. These stories about Weinstein's misogynist behaviors and repeated acts of sexual harassment and sexual assault were widely covered by the traditional media (Farrow, 2017). The hashtag itself gained traction on social media by mid-October, a trend started by actress Alyssa Milano, who encouraged the sharing of the hashtag to promote awareness of the widespread issue of sexual misconduct in the entertainment industry. The rapid replies extended the use of the tag into fields unrelated to entertainment. Facebook and Instagram quickly adopted the use of the tag, and social media platforms were soon flooded with personal stories of sexual assault (Codrea-Rado, 2017).

The #MeToo movement did not originally contain a hashtag and existed long before the Milano's tweet. Tarana Burke, a survivor of sexual assault herself, began the movement after a harrowing conversation with a young woman who had decided to share her story (Brockes, 2017). Ten years later, "Me Too" was used as a slogan for Burke's non-profit, Just Be Inc., created with the aim to help victims of sexual assault and harassment, namely within minority groups. When the hashtag exploded on social media, Burke was skeptical at best, voicing her long-standing concerns about both social media and the "great lack of intersectionality across these various movements" (Garcia, 2017, p. 2). Burke's foundation and the origin of the phrase "me too" have been included continuously in awareness campaigns and mass media coverage. The #MeToo movement has resonated at a global scale, and participants of the movement were named TIME Magazine's Person of the Year in December 2017 (Zacharek, Docketerman, &

Sweetland-Edwards, 2017). Within a week of its introduction in mid-October, over 10 million users had interacted with the hashtag (Cordea-Rado, 2017). Participation ranged from simply posting the hashtag to the retelling of stories of sexual violence, mostly by women. Its use is not limited to the United States as the personal experiences were posted across the world. The nature of the posts generated under the umbrella of #MeToo, from the experiences shared to the content that accompanied them, is worth further examination.

### **Related Studies**

Fraser (1990) discusses the historical marginalization of women within public spheres, beginning from the establishment of men as the dominant forces behind public organizations like government. While men established dominance in public spaces, women became the center of the “private” space of the domesticated home. This association left women out of decision making processes and influenced what issues were brought into public discussion. Issues related to the private space were thus left out of public conversation, and clear lines were drawn around what was to be discussed in public spaces (Fraser, 1990). This divide changed, as society and feminist thought evolved and continues to discourage discussion about the sensitive topic of sexual assault in public spheres that are notoriously dominated by the “masculine” nature of public conversation. Salter (2012, 2013), building upon the boundaries of the public sphere presented by Fraser (1990), presents the digital space as a counter-public. Online, topics of the private sphere such sexual assault experiences have the opportunity to generate discussion and challenge public representation (Salter, 2012). The counter-public of the internet, however viable to audience interpretation (Salter, 2013), provides a space that allows them to share their stories without censoring or gatekeeping by the media.

While new media technology has been involved in traditional media coverage about sexual assault, the underlying issues of power and gender are not discussed. Research on cases of sexual violence have found that journalists were more interested in “discussing how evidence of a sexual assault circulated on new media technology than the underlying power structures that contributed to the actual assault” (Pennington & Birthisel, 2016, p. 2446). Such framing discourages public discussion on issues of gendered power and downplays the violent experiences and trauma endured by sexual assault victims through their invalidation (Salter, 2012). The feminist perspective lacks a presence in news organizations: newsroom staffers often avoid the term “feminism” when identifying themselves, regardless of gender, reflecting the traditional and dominant masculine culture of journalism (Benedict, 1993; North, 2009; Tuchman, Daniels, & Benét, 1978). In court reporting of trials about sexual assault, the privileged status of the accused is often used to suggest innocence (Meyers, 1994; Watson, 2016).

Journalists often face challenges reporting sexual violence stories, largely trust-related, due to the victim’s feelings of vulnerability and fear of being misrepresented by the media’s framing of their experiences (Blanding, 2017). Traditional media coverage also has limited discussion on intersectional factors relating to sexual violence. Portrayals of victims of sexual violence varied across different target markets and often used “scary” language to warn audiences of the dangers of sexual violence (Cuklanz, 2000; Gilchrist, 2010; Lykke, 2016). The differences in language used in media intended for intersectional audiences versus the mass audience exemplifies differences in the interpretation of the danger of sexual assault and the process of sharing stories about sexual violence. The current research explores how victims of

sexual violence choose to represent themselves and their experiences in the absence of the gatekeepers of mass media.

With the audience of traditional media channels undermined by the practices of gatekeepers, victims of sexual assault within virtual communities have utilized the ability to maintain a state of anonymity on the internet. The feeling of safety that comes with being anonymous has resulted in higher tendencies of self-disclosure (Andalibi, Haimson, De Choudhury, & Forte, 2016). Over the past decade, researchers have examined increasing usage of social media with higher tendencies of self-disclosure (de Ridder & van Bauwel, 2015), even with content that is more intimate in nature (Bazarova & Choi, 2014; Vogel, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2018). Increased levels of self-disclosure amongst users of social media has allowed for the discussion of more private topics such as sexual assault. Within the last decade, news stories involving instances of sexual violence and harassment have sparked discussions online advocating for justice for victims, particularly those of marginalized groups (Fisher, 2016; Rodino-Colocino, 2014). Low cost and increasingly accessible social media sites have offered minority groups a platform to empower themselves collectively and build community through the use of new linguistic tools such as hashtags (Chen, 2017).

Contributors to these discussions are both anonymous and identified by details included on the profiles of social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook. Users who posted stories with the #MeToo tag do not necessarily have the advantage of anonymity; Facebook users often develop their profiles with detailed information such as their birthday, place of work, and general interests. Posts are shared with friends and/or the public, depending on the individual's user settings. Groups, public and private, are established as spaces in which users can share specific types of content directly to a particular subset with a strong interest in the subject. Because of



this, the language and information that is used in stories about sexual assault on Facebook has the potential to differ in their content and structure.

From an intersectional perspective, it is important to acknowledge the existence of people who are part of the discourse on any subject (Davis, 2008; Schradie, 2012). Just as class distinctions have influenced the coverage from traditional media (Cuklanz, 2000; Franiuk, Seefeldt, Cephess, & Vandello, J, 2008; Gilchrist, 2010; Meyers, 1994), they have also impacted the use of technology and social media (Salter, 2013). Language used and topics discussed within minority groups online have been determined by intersectional factors relating to traditional power structures (Chen, 2017; Drummond & Camara, 2014). The design and accessibility of social media networks have discouraged participation from users with intellectual, physical, or psychiatric disabilities (Campbell, 2008; Ellis, Goggin, Huntsinger, & Senft, 2014). This in turn “effects wider participation in shaping culture and society,” especially as social media continues to permeate our lives (Ellis, Goggin, Huntsinger, & Senft, 2014, p. 129). Recognizing that not all voices are being heard in the counterpublic of the internet and/or participating in discussions online is central to this research. The issue of unequal representation on the internet due to issues of accessibility and digital literacy gaps has been highlighted in the literature (Gorski, 2003; Salter, 2013) and remains a topic of conversation for scholars of new media and feminist thought (Korn & Kneese, 2014; Latina & Docherty, 2014, Shaw, 2014). The #MeToo movement gives people with access to social media technologies a platform to share their experiences of sexual assault, and it is important to explore the manner in which they choose to do so in the absence of traditional gatekeepers.

### **Research Questions**

In examining the stories about sexual violence shared with the #MeToo hashtag, this research asked the following questions:

RQ1: What type of experiences were shared using the #MeToo on Facebook?

RQ2: What type of content accompanied the sharing of these experiences?

RQ3: How do individuals sharing their stories of sexual violence on Facebook identify themselves?

RQ4: How do individuals share stories of sexual violence on Facebook?

### **Methodology**

A qualitative textual analysis was conducted to answer the above research questions. Textual analysis, paired with an intersectional feminist lens and a focus on individual narratives, allowed for the exploration of underlying power structures, gendered and otherwise, that presented themselves within the stories shared about sexual violence on Facebook. Textual analysis requires the close examination of texts generated by individuals or groups in an effort to understand the ways people make sense of the world they live in (McKee, 2003). Narrative analysis, a form of textual analysis, examines the properties of stories people share and the role they play as a reflection of their experience with the world (Treadwell, 2013). Individual stories vary depending on the social context in which the experience occurs. According to Treadwell (2013), narrative analysis pays attention to how these stories are shared to determine characteristics of said context, including power dynamics.

Feminist research in the social sciences has often employed a content analysis methodology in the examination of cultural artifacts that are produced by people (Reinharz, 1992). These cultural artifacts are the result of “individual activity, social organization, technology, and cultural patterns,” and can be categorized into four main types: written records,

narratives and visual texts, material culture, and behavioral residues (p. 147). The postings on Facebook about sexual violence with #MeToo can arguably fall under the written records, narratives, and visual texts categories. The stories shared within the posts are crafted by individuals who are interpreting their experiences for a larger audience. Researchers attempt to understand individual experiences and how they attribute meaning to those experiences by analyzing these stories as texts (Clandinin, 2006). The content of narratives generated by users on social media contain information on how they view the world around them. The content included in this sharing process is unique to the individual. Literature on the construction of identity through narratives argues that individual stories about life experiences both construct identities and reveal ways about how “relational setting” influences how people create such narratives (Somers, 1994, p. 624). Paired with an intersectional feminist lens, textual analysis allows a researcher to explore how stories about sexual violence are being shared.

Third wave feminism focuses on issues of inequality and recognizes that intersectional factors directly impact power dynamics between individuals. The topic of sexual violence, an issue with power structures and the abuse of such power at its core, is traditionally gendered. These stories often involve the subordination of the female to a dominant male figure (Benedict, 1993; Franiuk, Seefeldt, Cephress, & Vandello, J, 2008; Lykke, 2016; Meyers, 1994; Watson, 2016). Language within text has been examined by previous feminist work to reveal how stories of sexual violence have been framed. Social media networks such as Facebook have given individuals, particularly those of marginalized groups, more opportunities to express themselves and their values in supportive groups (Chen, 2017). However, undertones of power dynamics that guide conversation are often revealed through the nature of written discourse online and offline (Korn & Knease, 2015; Salter, 2013). Without traditional gatekeepers, these structures

have been found to still guide activities of users of online discussion boards and social media networks (Drummond & Camara, 2014).

For this study, posts on Facebook using the phrase “Me Too” and the variations “MeToo” and “#MeToo” were collected through a manual search of the social media network. Posts collected for analysis were shared publicly by users during October through December of 2017, when the hashtag #MeToo was trending in the mass media. Facebook, unlike Twitter and Instagram, has a more textual focus and does not restrict users to a character limit in their postings. Hence, longer narratives can be constructed, and visual content included. I did not interact with the posts themselves by joining the group or saving them on Facebook; instead, a screenshot of the original post was taken, given an identification number, and saved externally. No stories shared within private groups or networks are incorporated in my data sample. Public status was determined by Facebook filters and the status of the group or page where the content had been posted. To be included in the sample, the posts had to contain a retelling of a personal experience with sexual violence. Search results that contained only the hashtag or a restatement of the movement’s purpose with the use of a stock copy/paste message were discarded. “Sexual violence” was used as an umbrella term to include experiences such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape, and sexual abuse, both verbal and physical.

A total of 65 posts were gathered this way, then vetted for duplicates and double-checked for the inclusion of an experience and public publishing status. The revised sample of 61 posts was then coded using the established codebook into an Excel spreadsheet (see Appendix 2). The analysis was completed in three phases, first phase focused on the origin of each post (individual Facebook wall or public Facebook group). If the writer of the post was not the person who experienced the assault, it was noted as such. During coding, the posts were examined for the

inclusion of the following variables: age at the time of experience (range or exact age), racial identification (white, black, Hispanic, etc.), gender identification (male, female, trans, etc.), any implication of blame, and the inclusion of visual content (images and videos). The presence and absence of each variable within individual post was recorded using an established code book (see Appendix 2).

Once the coding was complete, the second phase involved analysis of the posts for the overarching themes. The spreadsheet was uploaded into Dedoose, a web application used for mixed methods research, in order to locate and organize themes within the posts noted during the first round of coding. The application allowed me to create codes for non-demographic details of the posts, highlighted as excerpts in the program. A total of 52 codes were created, sorted into five root groups: author identification, perpetrator identification, implications of blame, inclusion of graphic details, and tone of the post (see Appendix 3). A sixth root code was created (“intersectional”) to allow for easier identification in the second and third levels of analysis, which focused around overarching feminist narratives and intersectional factors. The final phase of analysis focused on a close reading of the codes to identify any themes and trends that emerged from the content of the posts.

Due to the personal and private nature of the stories that were shared, I have decided not to disclose the usernames of the posters. While their experiences were shared publicly by choice, I do not find it to be my place to release their identities in connection to these experiences. I believe that most of the authors would not want their experiences with sexual violence to define them through publication, an argument supported by overall reluctance to come forward to traditional gatekeepers and authority (Blanding, 2017; Salter, 2012).

## **Results**

### **Overview of Sample**

The sample of Facebook posts included 15 posts from a public group, nine from an admin-controlled page, one from a personal professional page, and 36 from individual public walls. Of the 61 posts that were analyzed, 52 of the posts identified their attacker as male through the use of pronouns or the inclusion of names. Only one user identified the perpetrator of the incident as female, and seven posts did not indicate or imply gender overtly. A single post attributed both male and female labels to their assailant. Race was not reported or referenced in 53 of the 61 posts. Visual content was also uncommon in the text-based sharing of experiences of sexual violence; only 13 users within the sample chose to include images, videos, or outside web pages into their posts. Throughout the following analysis, I discuss various posts individually and collectively. All of posts were assigned a number and are indexed in Appendix 4 for reference.

### **RQ1: What type of experiences were shared using the #MeToo movement on Facebook?**

During the initial search, the phrase “Me Too” brought forward results that shared what will be referred to as the stock message of the Facebook movement. There were several variations of this message, placed either at the beginning or the end of the post to signify the user’s participation in the social media movement (see Appendix 4, post 41). Many users copied and pasted the stock message into their Facebook status without adding any additional context or giving more detail about their experience. For that reason, they were not included in the sample, as this research sought to observe how stories were being shared differently than what would be considered the status quo.

The experiences shared on Facebook ranged from catcalling to graphic descriptions of assault and rape. Across the data, 36 posts described experiences with sexual assault, 27 included

recollections of harassment, and 19 mentioned incidents of rape. Further, five posts disclosed experiences of molestation, and five referenced long term sexual, physical, and emotional abuse. While 26 of the posts collected recounted a single incident, the other 35 referenced multiple or continuous experiences with sexual violence. When included in the post, the age of the victim at the time of the incident was usually young, under 30 years of age. This is consistent with current statistics about sexual violence: According to RAINN (n.d.-a), people over 18 and under 30 are at the highest risk of sexual violence. In 12 cases, the poster was able to avoid direr physically violent experiences. These posters often identified themselves as a voice for the voiceless, for those who could not come forward for any reason (posts 6, 18, 21, 28). This type of claim was frequently coupled with a call for social change and awareness of the problem of sexual violence (post 18, 24, 41). While these users are likely to have the good intentions, there is a marked difference between experiences of verbal harassment and an act of rape. Putting more violent incidents on the same plane as being cat-called can be problematic, perhaps invalidating reactions of other victims who did not share their stories under the #MeToo hashtag.

**RQ2: What type of content accompanied the sharing of these experiences?**

Visual content was uncommon in the stories examined. Only nine included photos or videos, and three included links to articles related to sexual violence or the origin of the #MeToo hashtag. One post shared content from other users, along with the “Me Too” stock message that encouraged others to spread awareness by copying and pasting the same text onto their wall (post 21). When images were included, they were what could be presumed as photographs of the author of the posts (posts 11, 26, 51). These images followed posts that were longer and more detailed in the description of the individual’s experience. However, the sharing of visual content was not the norm; the posts analyzed were narrative-based without the addition of audio/visuals.

#MeToo has remained in the headlines sporadically since October 2017, but the number of stories shared on Facebook tapered off as news cycles turned over. Thus, it is unsurprising to find that 45 of the posts collected were published in October, 10 in November, and six in December.

Out of the 61 posts, 27 included graphic details describing user's experience with sexual violence. These details were coded for their presence in the posts, and several posts included different types of graphic detail. Physical wounds received during the incident, including bruises and broken bones, were described in 7 posts. Groping, typically by strangers, occurred in 13 of the posts, and 4 specifically mentioned the act of undressing. There were 3 accounts of unwanted exposure to masturbation, and 7 stories in which the victim was pressured into participating in a sexual act through the use of drugs, physical force, or manipulation. Details of sexual assault were given in 3 posts, and another 3 described molestation. The most graphic details involved intense descriptions of rape, which appeared in 5 of the 61 posts.

The level of detail provided in some of the stories shared publicly using #MeToo on Facebook is reflective of the increasing level of self-disclosure that users of social media have become comfortable with (Andalibi, Haimson, De Choudhury, & Forte, 2016). By nature, encounters with sexual violence are personal and violating, which prevents many from sharing their stories and seeking out support. While the Internet may provide people with a space in which they feel safe enough to disclose such private experiences, Facebook users often base their online social networks on their offline relationships, occasionally becoming friends with people they've only interacted with once (Chen, 2017). The posts sampled for this study were published to the public, accessible to anyone performing a manual search, adding an additional level of disclosure.



**RQ3: How do individuals sharing their stories of sexual violence on Facebook identify themselves?**

Considering all 61 posts, 70.1% used empowering language and/or identified themselves as survivor versus a victim of sexual violence. Within the group of survivors, posters would often indicate a shift in themselves from being a victim to becoming a survivor, brought on by the healing powers of time (posts 20, 25, 52), support from friends and family (post 8, 11, 42), extensive psychological treatment (post 3), or even the #MeToo movement (post 9). No posts analyzed could be clearly classified as being authored by a woman who identified as a lesbian, but two male authors identified themselves as gay. Both posters included stories that used language more consistent with the vulnerable state of a victim versus the empowering language of a survivor (posts 12 and 16).

Some of the posts included information about the author's occupation, occasionally accompanied by an acknowledgement of their assailant's profession. Three industries stood out of the data, referenced by multiple authors for being associated with the act of sexual violence: food service, medicine, and entertainment. Authors who shared work-related experiences within food service or restaurant industry (posts 36 and 49) indicated that they were either afraid to come forward and complain due to the normalcy of the behavior or had been turned away when they did bring the incident up to management or security. One poster was fired from her restaurant job for speaking up and has avoided walking by the place ever since (post 35).

Posts that described violating experiences in medical settings expressed particularly strong feelings of betrayal (post 39) and a fear that the status and job responsibilities of the medical professional would allow their attackers to commit similar acts on other unknowing

patients (post 33). The author of post 34 was stunned to see how many others were affected before she was and wondered if she would have been “spared” if they had come forward.

Since the origins of the #MeToo movement on social media originally addressed issues within the entertainment industry, it is of no surprise that a number of stories that were shared took place either in the entertainment industry or involved an assailant who worked in entertainment (posts 9, 10, 23, 31). In one post, a hostess at a catered party for a tennis match recollected an experience with one actor who has been active in political satire, revealing the character paradoxes within the entertainment industry (post 31). Many posters expressed feelings of gratitude and happiness that the #MeToo hashtag was trending, but a few users came forward with some concerns. Like other forms of feminist activism on social media (Aronson, 2017; Latina & Docherty, 2014; Rodino-Colocino, 2014), the #MeToo has been subject to critique. These users pointed out issues with the movement and critiqued its inclusion and brevity. One poster, a male, testified to the difficulties male victims have in coming forward and being recognized as victims compared to females (post 24). In the same vein, some posters who identified as participants of the #MeToo movement were critical of the movement. One author specifically found a problem with posts that are vague and don't directly identify the perpetrator of the act of sexual violence (post 1).

#### **RQ4: How do individuals share stories of sexual violence on Facebook?**

The stories shared during the height of the #MeToo movement contained a vast number of experiences, explained and retold in ways unique to each individual poster. Various levels of detail were included, occasionally preceded by warnings about the nature of the content that was about to be read (posts 12, 20, 57). Disclosure varied on a case by case basis, with some posts skirting around direct terminology such as sexual assault, choosing to describe their experience

more vaguely instead of using concrete labels. The opposite also occurred, with some authors labeling their experience with sexual violence outright at the beginning of their posts.

### Betrayal of Trust

Many of the posters expressed feelings of betrayal surrounding their experiences. This betrayal was often directed towards law enforcement or other authoritative systems, the very systems that they had believed would protect them and deliver justice. In the sample, 10 posts expressed difficulties with the legal system, law enforcement, organization administrations, or a combination of the three when they sought to bring their attackers to justice. They received warnings from their friends and family and were discouraged from doing so by people situated within those very systems, anticipating the potential problems they'd encounter (post 45). Repeated failed attempts for justice instilled a distrust of authorities and the legal system in general (post 34). School administrations and media organizations also were discouraging when the posters came forward with their stories. In some cases, posters were ignored entirely, suggesting that the behaviors of the perpetrators were the norm. These findings serve to support and reinforce the lack of trust in the systems in place that deal with acts of sexual violence: Two out of three incidents of sexual violence go unreported (RAINN, n.d.-b).

Others felt particularly betrayed by their family members. In six situations, family members were the perpetrators who the victim had obeyed as authority figures and depended on to give guidance. Parents, guardians, and friends who neglected to give support or refused to believe the authors were pointed out with anger and sadness. These closer relationships amplified the experience's emotional impact on the authors, and often added to the challenge of the healing process that would transform them from victim to survivor.

**Gendered Power.** Descriptions of assailants in the sample of posts directly depicted the abuses by men in positions of power. In these scenarios, men filled roles that gave them authority over some of the decisions that impacted the lives and careers of those residing within the lower levels. This becomes problematic when power abusers are entwined in legal or administrative systems within larger organizations. Their connections within their organization and within their community present challenges to victims who wish to press charges for sexual harassment, assault, and rape. While these power imbalances were acknowledged by multiple posters, there were only a few authors (three of the 61 in the sample) who challenged the status of a male in a position of power within their place of work or community. In one instance, a female prosecutor discouraged her client, the poster, from seeking justice through the law due to the legal system's handling of previous sexual assault cases. The author of post 45 listened to the advice and abstained from pressing charges, choosing instead to focus on healing herself without the government's support.

**Emotional Toll and Sexual Abuse.** The act of sexual violence stirs up strong emotions both within victims and non-victims. Psychologically speaking, anger is a common emotional response to pain, vulnerability, and fear within humans. Sex crimes include aspects of all three (Andreassi, 2010). Victims and survivors of sexual violence in the sample directed anger, rage, and resentment towards men in general and society at large (post 53 and 56). One poster took on what could be considered a vigilante position, bettering herself through physical training so that she would be able to defend herself as well as others. She puts it succinctly: "we are our sisters' keepers" (post 39), implying that it is up to women to fight for themselves or thus be victimized. Other posts by anonymous users indicated feelings of fear or dread at the thought of what would happen should their identities and stories become publicized. These included the potential

consequences that would come onto their families or loved ones (post 38). Authors emphasized the fear of being outcasted from their social and professional circles, a fear that is enforced by other posters who experienced this kind of alienation.

While stories of long term abuse were not common in the data, some posts described situations in which they were emotionally and physically manipulated by their partners (post 20 and 27). All of these partners were identified as male, and the victims in all but one case were female. One author admitted to enduring abuse during an eight-year long relationship (post 55), and another shared that her former partner pressured her into participating in sexual acts (post 58). Another survivor told her audience how she was maliciously drugged and assaulted following an attempt at friendship with her perpetrator (post 57).

**Power in Patriarchal Society: Internalizing Misogyny.** A critical feminist lens was used to analyze the content of the posts, the primary goal of exploring the narratives presented in the Facebook posts was to identify their compatibility with the values and goals of feminist theory. A reoccurring facet of the posts within the sample was the idea that women must act to change the behaviors of men within society, to be the agents of change despite the “lesser than” status of women when compared to men (Salter, 2012). Post 3 features not only a retelling of experiences with sexual violence but also a suggested therapeutic method that the author said helped her “reclaim [her] body” as her own, implying that it was never hers in the first place and that she is to blame for allowing people to treat her body as property. In post 32, a woman who shared a story of harassment and manipulation by her employer presents a narrative that is incompatible with a feminist mindset. Self-blame occurs sporadically throughout the post, as she blames her very nature for the incident, feeling that ownership of her physical body and devotion was the payment required for a man’s assistance.

I blame my vulnerability, lack of experience and lack of self-worth for allowing his aggressive attention to make me develop a dependency on him. I also blame my goodness, which always reminded me that I should give him a chance because if I didn't, I wouldn't be humble or grateful to what he'd done for me. I felt like I owed him something because he had offered to help me when he didn't have to.

This indicates a level of internalized misogyny that is problematic, because it exists only when the male is in a position of power. Females have been traditionally stereotyped as caregivers, domesticated to serve the male agenda. This poster blames herself for this dependence, while simultaneously citing her inexperience for giving in to it, reflecting a form of paradoxical thought process feminists wish to eliminate through assertion of equality. Posts like the one above indicate a level of internalized misogyny that exists within the poster themselves, which is then reflected in their activity on digital platforms. Many of the posters echoed the feminist call for change in society, and for more awareness of gendered phenomena such as sexual violence. However, many posters expressed a desire for change within the parenting of women and girls, not within men and boys. Girls, they reiterated, were never told to say no (post 46) and were not empowered as children (post 36), which then led to experiences of sexual violence, physical and verbal.

**Performing Gender & Stigmas.** Gender has traditionally been viewed in binary, black and white in terms of what is male and what is female (Butler, 1999). Over time, this has proven to be problematic to individuals who do not fully identify as either male or female as well as to those who do not identify with the gender conventionally associated with their biological sex (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Wood (2017) describes the struggles faced by the transgender and nonbinary individuals, who have only recently become more accepted into society due to the

slow and steady liberalization of cultures in urban areas. Those who do not identify with the gender associated with their biological sex struggle with self-concept and with communicating their unique identities to others within their community. This is further compounded by the cultural pressures that come with performing each gender, both male and female.

Sexual violence is a gendered phenomenon (Salter, 2012), with the victim usually identified as female and the assailant as male (RAINN, n.d.-a). Female victims are often criticized for taking harassment offensively instead of flirtatiously, blamed for the incident due to their choice in clothing, or otherwise robbed of their agency using reasons based around their performed gender. When the victim is transgender, their experience may be subject to more critical interpretation by others due to assumptions surrounding the transition process. In the sample, the author of post 5 identified themselves as a transgender woman. She expresses how important the #MeToo movement is to her and her frustrations about being told she was “overreacting.” She also attests to other women invalidating her experiences because she “couldn’t understand what it is like to be a ‘real’ woman dealing with it.”

**Race, Ethnicity, and Power.** Intersectional feminism came forward in feminist literature as a criticism to the “whiteness” of second wave feminism (Campbell, 1973; Collins, 2009; Wood, 2017). Race was not often mentioned in the sharing of experiences of sexual violence under #MeToo. The race of the author could be inferred from the profile pictures and usernames, but only a handful identified their own race or the race of their attackers. One story in particular stands out from the sample. The author identifies herself as a young black woman and describes the attacker as a young white male serving as a police officer in her county. The combination of privileged race, gender, and position of power held by the attacker is shown to have a suffocating effect on the victim. Post 7 was one of the more graphic posts in the sample as the act of rape

was described in detail. She was told by her attacker that no one would believe her because she was a young black woman and he was a white cop. At the close of her story, the poster states that she “never got justice,” and that her attacker was still employed as a police officer in a neighboring town. Not only does this post exemplify the power dynamic between men and women and the invalidation of the female sex, but it also shows the role race plays in the interpretation of an experience from both the victim’s standpoint as well as that of the public. Women in positions of privilege, particularly white women, do not face the same level of scrutiny as black women do (Crenshaw, 1989). Online, this individual was able to share her story with a supportive community that is disengaged from her physically, providing a sense of safety she does not have offline.

Interestingly enough, only one author directly identified themselves as being a feminist (post 4). Despite the inclusive nature of modern feminist movements, the term “feminism” still carries a stigma for being catered towards the goals and ambitions of middle class white women (Aronson, 2017; Campbell, 1973; Collins, 2009; Wood, 2017). The visual content included in the post 4 and the user’s profile picture shows that the author is a working white woman, perpetuating the stereotype of white feminism.

**Disability.** Three posts in the sample were found to be authored by persons with physical or intellectual disabilities. One identified as an man on the autism spectrum (post 50), another revealed that they were wheelchair bound (post 33). The third did not label herself as handicapped within the text of the post, but the photo attached revealed that she required crutches to walk (post 18). The author of post 33 reflected on the assumptions made by able bodied persons about the disabled:



...but just because someone is in a wheelchair doesn't mean they can't feel and it doesn't give someone the right to touch them sexually! but it seems people think that it's okay because we're disabled.

Persons with physical and intellectual disabilities are often excluded from consideration in terms of accessibility to technology and are frequently misunderstood by the able bodied and those without intellectual disabilities. Their inability to communicate as effectively as an able-bodied person can add to the difficulties involved with experiences of sexual violence. Social media platforms have yet to be optimized for persons with physical and mental disabilities, despite advancements in computer technologies (Campbell, 2008; Ellis, Goggin, Huntsinger, & Senft, 2014). Thus, disabled persons lack the ability to participate in movements like #MeToo, joining those individuals within lower income classes who do not have access to the Internet and other groups that lack the digital literacy to use technology effectively.

### **Discussion**

This study looked at personal accounts of sexual violence that were shared using the #MeToo hashtag on Facebook. These stories included details that would likely have been omitted by print and broadcast media outlets and put individual users in a position of control in interpreting their experience for a mass audience (Drummond & Camara, 2014; Salter, 2013). The nuances about sexual violence found within the individual stories shared are not included in traditional media coverage, which often sensationalizes stories of sexual violence by selecting stories about popular celebrities or choosing alternative frames (Pennington & Birthisel, 2016). This research revealed details about the complex modern power dynamic between genders, particularly within minority groups, and provides a snapshot of the alarming extent to which heteronormativity and misogyny are internalized by individuals and reflected within their digital

communication. The types of experiences shared included harassment, assault, rape, molestation, and abuse. Nearly half of the posters in the sample opted to share graphic details about their experiences, and most authors included several experiences in their post. The sample was largely female, with only 7 posts authored by men. Transgender and disabled persons were uncommon in the data set. In 52 cases, the perpetrator was identified as male.

Traditional masculine power structures within organizations such as the medical field and entertainment industry were revealed, but not challenged. A handful of posters had been disappointed by the actions of law enforcement and the legal system when they chose to press charges, and others admitted to not reporting incidents out of fear or shame. Others kept their silence at the request of their families. Only a few posters were successful in bringing justice to their attackers. While most of the sample used empowering language, the posts also included expressions of regret, sadness, and anger. Within the stories shared, many authors expressed desire for change, and outrage at society. This was often followed by suggestions about changing how girls were raised, and that the task of reclaiming agency and power over their bodies fell into their own hands. The parenting of young boys was not discussed.

From an intersectional perspective, the posts reasserted the claim that race, disability, and gender can combine and multiply experiences of oppression within victims of sexual violence. One particularly graphic story exemplified how race, gender, and institutionally powerful position could silence a victim of a violent rape. The sole transgender author shared how her experiences with assault and harassment had been invalidated by both men and women, reflecting a mainstream misconception of the transgender community. A disabled poster expressed concern for others with disabilities after her experience during a hospital stay. Each of these intersectional posts communicated that they felt misunderstood and subordinate to other

people in society. These posts described the added challenges that marginalized groups face when they experience acts of sexual violence as compared to more privileged groups.

With the issue of sexual assault continuing to make headlines, it is important to examine the new outlets that victims of sexual violence have at their disposal to share their experiences and seek support. Digital spaces have become a safe space to talk about personal issues and private struggles with subjects such as sexual assault (Andalibi, Haimson, De Choudhury, & Forte, 2016). As exemplified by recent media coverage (Zacharek, Docketerman, & Sweetland-Edwards, 2017), the breadth of the sexual violence problem is slowly becoming known. Previous news coverage of stories of sexual violence, physical and verbal, have been problematic, often misconstrued to the public through use of specific frames (Pennington & Birthisel, 2016). The hashtag #MeToo prompted millions of online users to share their experiences without traditional gatekeepers.

The #MeToo movement is less than a year old and still evolving. Therefore, research has yet to examine many of its facets in great detail. However, as digital culture makes its place in feminist history (Cuklanz, 2016; Wood, 2017), #MeToo has established itself as one of the largest feminist moments of the past fifty years. (Tuchman, Daniels, & Benét, 1987; Benedict, 1993). The Internet is a massive asset to the feminist cause (Wood, 2017), but intersectional theory suggests that we consider the potential pitfalls of using online culture. Lower income classes have significantly less access to digital technologies that would allow them to participate in feminist social media activism like #MeToo (Bivens, 2015; Gorski, 2003). Posts by disabled or handicapped authors within the sample reflected a concern of being excluded from consideration and having their experiences misunderstood (Keilty & Connelly, 2001). Disabled persons have difficulty using social media due to issues of accessibility and design (Ellis,

Goggin, Huntsinger, & Senft, 2014). Using social media platforms to engage in activism against an issue that impacts the physically and intellectually disabled and underprivileged considerably more may leave these voices out of the conversation and subdue progress in the understanding of the phenomenon of sexual violence.

This research brought forward a number of individual concerns about the future of the #MeToo movement that have been reiterated in the media. Posters in the sample critiqued its exclusivity to cis-women, echoing comments about previous feminist movements (Crenshaw, 1989; Wood, 2017). Only one poster directly identified themselves as a feminist, indicating that the perception of feminism as an ideology is still stigmatized despite #MeToo. If #MeToo is to be a true feminist movement, promoting equality over all else and avoiding issues encountered by second-wave feminism, it must also consider sexual violence experienced by men and transgender individuals. With its roots in social media, it must also take into account the groups that are unable to participate on the platform. These individuals are especially impacted by sexual violence, and accessibility to the internet may add to pressures to keep silent.

Overall, the #MeToo movement intends to move beyond individual awareness of the commonality of their experience and into a realm of political and social knowledge-building regarding sexual violence. Social media platforms have created a space separate from the sensationalism of traditional journalism in which individuals can stand in solidarity, using their own experiences as a basis for the beginnings of a broader conversation about sexual violence in society. However, there is still trepidation around the subject, and around #MeToo's significance at a national level. A nationwide survey found that while the majority of women support the movement, they are also apprehensive of its scope and its potential to backfire, impacting future career opportunities and men in their lives (North, 2018). The #MeToo movement has divided

women over the true intent of the movement, but most are not ready to dismiss its validity and importance. The future of #MeToo is difficult and uncertain, and its success will require constant critique from those who support it. Discussions about individual agency, paired with an awareness of how agency is perceived within marginalized groups, would be a crucial step forward in the understanding the gendered issue of sexual violence.

### **Limitations**

One of the limitations of a qualitative methodology is a small sample size. The #MeToo hashtag appeared in millions of posts, but this study only examined 61 of them. In addition, only public posts were selected for analysis, possibly preventing certain themes from appearing within the data. A central component of the study involved ableism and its relationship to the platforms provided on the Internet. It was expected that some groups would be underrepresented in the sample, including users with disabilities and lower income groups. Differences in individual levels of disclosure online as well as differences in the narrative structure of the posts hindered the gathering of concrete demographic information from the users involved in #MeToo. These absences and omissions from the data set prevented further intersectional analysis from being conducted. My textual analysis of the posts did not allow for me to draw conclusions surrounding each poster's explicit or implicit purpose for sharing their experiences through this particular social media platform. Additionally, social media algorithms may have also affected how the posts were collected, as Facebook does not allow searches to be conducted without being logged into an account. My personal activity on the platform could have altered what stories appeared when I searched for posts containing "Me Too" and its variations. As the sole researcher involved in the project, I was the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis.

### **Future Studies**

Future studies examining the #MeToo movement or gender-based violence could interview prominent storytellers within the online movement. Interviews would allow for deeper examination of the goals associated with the movement and reveal problems associated with online feminist activism. The more in-depth questioning encouraged by the interview format would be advantageous in providing insight into why the posters decided to share their experiences of sexual violence on Facebook. The answers to these questions may reveal individual differences of what #MeToo means to them as a movement, and what they were aiming to accomplish by disclosing their own stories in the vast expanse of the internet. Further, private Facebook groups may be examined utilizing an appropriate method to observe how these online groups interact in a private setting to provide support. News coverage of the #MeToo movement in traditional media channels such as print and broadcast television could also be analyzed for use of frames, themes, and content. Results from said study could be compared to how individual posters chose to share their stories of sexual violence in online spaces like Facebook, where anonymity is not guaranteed.

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APPENDIX 1  
Definitions of Terms

- *Posts*: a single unit of user-created content on Facebook that is shared with a large, public audience; contains original contributions from the poster
- *Poster*: the creator of a post
- *Group*: an online space created on Facebook that allows for members to participate in discussion about common interests, ideas, and experiences
- *Public group*: an online conversation space on Facebook whose activities can be observed by the public, but participation is limited to members
- *Private group*: an online conversation space on Facebook whose activities are hidden to all but the members of the group
- *Heteronormativity*: the notion that heterosexuality is the only sexual orientation (thus, the “norm”) and that other forms of sexuality are deviant forms; “widely used as shorthand for the numerous ways in which heterosexual privilege is woven into the fabric of social life, pervasively and insidiously ordering everyday existence” (Jackson, 2006, p. 108)
- *Patriarchy*: a social system in which power resides solely within its male members, implicit or explicitly allowing men to dominate in leadership roles and moral authority
- *Ableism*: discrimination and/or prejudice against individuals with physical, intellectual, and psychiatric disabilities and in favor of able-bodied people
- *Sexual violence*: “a sexual act that is committed or attempted by another person without freely given consent of the victim or against someone who is unable to consent or refuse” (CDC, 2014)
- *Sexual assault*: refers to acts of unwanted physical sexual contact that occur without explicit consent from at least one involved party

- *Sexual harassment*: refers to harassment that involves the verbal communication of unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other obscene remarks of a sexual nature
- *Rape*: sexual intercourse or other forms of penetration that occur forcibly without valid consent; often carried out under threat of injury to the victim
- *Sexual abuse*: repeated instances of sexual violence inflicted upon an individual by the same perpetrator
- *Incident*: “A single act or series of acts of SV that are perceived to be connected to one another and that may persist over a period of minutes, hours, or days” (CDC, 2014)
- *Consent*: explicit permission to engage in an activity with another person; consent for sexual activities is only legally valid when given by individuals over 18 years old, and cannot be assumed through previous sexual activity or other manners of non-verbal communication
- *Survivor*: a person who has experienced an act of sexual violence and refers to themselves using language that is positive and empowering
- *Victim*: a person who has experienced an act of sexual violence and refers to themselves using language that emphasizes their weakness and vulnerability
- *Implication of blame*: identification of who is at fault for the incident of sexual violence; may vary in specificity
- *Internalization of blame*: occurs when the identification of blame focuses in on the attacked individual and their person/behaviors

APPENDIX 2

Code Book for the Textual Analysis of Stories About Sexual Violence on Facebook  
Using #MeToo

User/Profile Name:

Individual Post No.:

Date of Post:

Source of post (public wall post or public group):

Who wrote this post?

Does the author identify themselves directly?

Is the perpetrator of the act of sexual violence identified?

To what extent is the perpetrator identified?

Profession of attacker?

Does the post mention the race of the individual(s) involved in the incident?

Does the post include the age of the individual at the time of the incident?

Is the gender of the victim mentioned?

Is the gender of the attacker mentioned?

Does the post imply who is to blame for the incident of sexual violence?

Does the post include visual content? If so, what? (Provide a description)

Does the poster identify as a survivor or a victim?

What is the tone of the post (angry, sad, empowering, happy, defensive, etc)?

Were they able to avoid physical attack (assault/rape)? Yes or No



Physical harm?

Long term mental anguish?

APPENDIX 3  
Dedoose Code Tree

<b><u>Code Title</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>
<b>author_id</b>	
disabled	author identifies themselves as having a disability
feminist	author identifies themselves as a feminist
gay	author identifies themselves as gay/homosexual
movement_participant	author identifies themselves as part of the MeToo movement collectively
survivor	author uses empowering language and/or refers to themselves as a survivor of sexual violence
transgender	author identifies themselves as transexual
victim	author uses demeaning, minimizing, or "helpless" language and/or identifies as a victim of sexual violence w/o agency
voice_voiceless	author uses language that implies and/or identifies as one who is giving voice to the voiceless victims of sexual violence in addition to sharing their own experiences
<b>graphic_details</b>	
assault	post contains details of a sexual assault
groping	post describes an instance of groping


masturbation	post includes instances of perpetrator's masturbation
molestation	post mentions details about molestation
physical_wounds	post includes descriptions of physical wounds received (includes bruises, cuts, broken bones, etc)
pressured/forced	post includes the user being pressured or forced to perform a sexual act (includes references to drugs/being drugged)
rape_described	post includes graphic details of rape
undressing	the act of undressing/disrobing/removal of clothes from the victim is disclosed
<b>implied_blame</b>	
family	user places blame on family members (parents, grandparents, etc)
law_enforcement/system	law enforcement and/or the justice system is put at fault (includes school and medical administrations)
media	media coverage/misconceptions surrounding sexual violence are blamed
men	blame is directed at the behaviors of men in general and/or male privilege
movement_issue	implies problems with #MeToo
perpetrator	user places blame on attacker
self_blame	author blames themselves, their actions, or their behavior for bringing on or encouraging the act of sexual violence (can be partial)
society	society as a whole is blamed for the user's experience, with reference to power structures

victim_blame	user blames other victims and their behaviors
<b>intersectional</b>	
<b>perpetrator_id</b>	
academic	attacker identified as an academic (teacher, higher ed, etc)
colleague	attacker is identified as a coworker, colleague, classmate, or other equal position
directly_named	uses real name of assailant in post
employer/boss	perpetrator is author's employer or boss
entertainment	assailant is part of the entertainment industry
family_member	perpetrator is a member of the victim's family (includes "step" members and fiances)
friend	attacker is a friend/acquaintance of the author, can be used when stranger is not applicable
law_enforcement	perpetrator is a member of law enforcement or justice system
medical	attacker is in a medical profession (doctor, nurse, etc)
partner	assailant identified as romantic partner
stranger	author does not know assailant
<b>post_tone</b>	
angry	anger is present in the post, includes use of expletives
betrayal	narrative has a theme of betrayal

change_in_women	implies that women must take charge, make the changes, learn new behaviors/thought processes
detailed_experience	a detailed account of experience is given, a very vivid post
empowered	post contained empowering (strong, positive) language
fearful	emotion of fear was communicated within post
list	poster gives a list of experiences with sexual violence
regretful	author expresses regret over actions or about experience
sad	sadness/sorrow is indicated by use of language in post
society_callforaction	call for change in society's perception of sexual violence or attitudes towards women

APPENDIX 4  
Referenced Facebook Posts (Data Set)

Post 1:



October 19, 2017 · 🌐

**#MeToo** I have some observation or comments on the #MeToo platform. Why should we disclose victim's name only instead of culprit's name? Yes, I was also sexually harassed. Is there any output for disclosing this traumatic incident of my life?? If this social media campaign wants to work for raising awareness for preventing sexual abuse issues, the first task should be disclosing the culprit's name on the social media platform rather than #MeToo

I think #MeToo does not mean anything....YES I was sexually victimized at my early childhood, and I don't feel REGRET disclosing culprit's names here:

The culprit was:

- 1) Pial Bhai (my Singing Teacher of my childhood)
- 2) My brother's English Teacher (Forgot the name)

I know many girls experience such bad touch or unexpected touch by their close circle in childhood. I faced same and I believe women and family members should protest such harassment and take action against the culprits. We must ensure a safe childhood for our children.

Post 3:





November 30, 2017 · 🌐

I never felt as if my body was mine, not really. My father put his hands down my pants, kissed me on the lips, called women broads. And nothing I saw or heard as I was growing up taught me that what he was doing was aberrant or wrong. One man masturbated in front of me, others grabbed my breasts on the subway, pinched my butt, made lewd comments as I wove through crowds. Although these events were always degrading, I believed without knowing I believed that this body was meant to be used, not considered with kindness.

Then my erstwhile therapist handed me a six-foot piece of red string and told me to make a circle around my body, close the ends together, and sit in its center. She told me that the space inside the circle was mine, just mine. Oy, I thought, rolling my eyes. Here we go into the land of psycho-spiritual babble. But in the next second, I blurted: my body isn't mine, I'll get in trouble, other people won't like it. Then I cried.

It was both shocking and not shocking that there was little sense of body-ownership or the power that comes from standing in my own two shoes. Years of having this body shoved and grabbed and pinched had made me into my own metaphorical shover and grabber and pincher: I treated my body the way it had been treated, without boundaries, and with disrespect and contempt.

After practicing the red string project with my therapist and noticing the relief, amazement and sheer power of closing the ends of a measly piece of string, my attitude about my body began to shift. This translated into being willing to listen to the signals it had been broadcasting for years and that I'd been ignoring: the need for rest, discernment about what I ate, where I wanted to spend my energy, who I wanted to be with. I realized that being nice was overrated and that "No" and "I don't want to" are complete sentences. Eventually, I began teaching the red string project to my students and every time, the reaction was the same: I never knew I was allowed to: have my own body, say no, remain with myself and in my own boundary no matter what someone else is doing or saying.

In addition to the long-overdue #MeToo movement, another piece of unraveling misogyny is to realize that many of us unknowingly treat our bodies with the same harshness, shame and contempt that they were shown. But once we see this—and I have never met a woman, not in the tens of thousands I've met and worked with who cherishes her body or treats it with a modicum of kindness—we can create different patterns of behavior in our brains, in our relationships, and how we talk to ourselves.

Start the red string project. Pick up a six-foot piece of it today. Better yet, buy an entire skein of string and give out pieces to every woman you know. Sit in a chair or on the floor. Put the string around your body, and make sure there is enough space between you and the perimeter on all sides of the circle. Close the ends. Whether you are alone or with a friend, see what it feels like to consider this your inviolable space—and that there is no need to leave it to take care of another person. Notice the affect of reclaiming your body. Carry the red string in your purse, your pocket—or wrap it around your wrist—to remind yourself that you don't need to forget yourself in challenging interactions. Stay centered. Stay clear. Reclaim your body, your power.

Tell me what happens. [#redstringproject](#) [#tmml](#)

## Post 4:



October 19, 2017 · 🌐

Here it is: #MeToo -- It has been 8 months since I decided to fight back and press charges. But I hadn't spoken out about what happened that night. The fact that I didn't share this before makes me feel like part of the problem. This man was on probation for doing the same thing to another woman.

I pressed charges and he was prosecuted. He served his time.

This also reminds me of my friends [Anne M. Di Grazia](#) [Frances Wang](#) [Joey Khalil](#) and [Kristopher Hooks](#) who stood with me that night all night as police did their thing. And to [Golden 1 Center](#) security who responded so quickly and were so supportive.

This was my victim impact statement for the judge:

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I work on my well-being every day. I meditate, I exercise, I read, I live a productive life -- In the face of failure or life's challenges, I work hard to find my peace.

But on the night of February 9th, you took that peace from me. I felt unsafe, violated, and worst of all, I felt guilty for wearing a skirt. That angered me so much. On that night, and the weeks that followed I understood the frustration and the impotence of being made a victim.

You premeditated your attack, fooled me and proceeded to violate my space, my privacy and my feeling of safety.

I am a feminist, I come from a long lineage of strong women who fight for the rights and protection of women, children, and vulnerable populations. That is how I came to be a journalist, to speak up for those whose rights are being violated. I have led production teams into areas of conflict in the jungle in Colombia, areas controlled by guerrillas to give a voice to farmers who suffer from abuses of power.

I have sat with victims of human trafficking to amplify their message, so that women, young men, children and parents become aware of the very real threat they face. And yet, despite the harsh places where I have lived and worked, I had never felt as insecure and incomplete as I did on and after that night.

You may think of it as a joke, or as a prank or as a hobby. But what you did was painful and wrong and petty. It is clear to me that you are only half a man. Perhaps your mother is in fact a strong woman, who tried to make you a good man. In that case, I feel for her and for the disappointment she must feel right now.

But I am here to tell you that what you did hurt me. You had no right to take away my sense of security. I am also here to tell you that although you can't change what you have done in the past, I do believe you can change your behavior. You can take responsibility for your actions, and learn from this. You are in the process of becoming a father. I know that, and you don't have to disrespect your child or the mother of your child. You can take this wisdom, the understanding of the pain that you have caused and take the opportunity that you have been granted to live a productive life.



I know you have done this before, but you don't have to do this again. You can work on yourself by any means necessary, therapy, hard work, being present in the life of your child and stop this cycle. No person's body or intimacy is yours to take. On the night that you assaulted me, I thought of the human trafficking survivors who work at the Golden 1 Arena, people who are given a chance at rebuilding their lives past their trauma -- and how vulnerable they are to a predator working at the same building. I was angry and worried for their safety.

Hopefully we all learn from this, hopefully you finally understand the consequences of your actions and move on from your past. I trust that you can and will do that. And I trust that you will work with yourself and others to prevent sexual violence from breaking more people and harming more lives.



#### Post 5:



October 16, 2017 · 🌐

If folks don't find it empowering, so long as they are not telling people not to do it, I won't gainsay them. We all have to deal in our own way.

For me, [#metoo](#) is important. As a transwoman my experiences have been particularly dismissed, disbelieved, or delegitimized.

I have been told there is no way a man could be attracted to me enough to grope me, as if attraction was the reason men did, every week, for a year on the bus.

I have been told I couldn't understand what it is like to be a "real" woman dealing with it.

I have been told I was overreacting, because to the patriarchy, we trans women are even more "hysterical" than cis women, something too many cis women buy into, accusing us of "performing" womanhood.

Finally I have been told I should be flattered that a man would do that to me as a trans woman, again, often by cis women, as if ANY sexual assault had ANYTHING to do with anything but power.

So yes, I want everyone to know, yes, [#metoo](#).

## Post 6:



October 16, 2017 · 🌐

I have been sexually harassed countless times. A producer on a set tried to intimidate me into doing nudity. An Uber driver made overt gestures towards me in his car (that along with Uber's company history is why I refuse to use them.) An attorney got mad at me because I wouldn't go to a hotel room with him. Endless, faceless men have whistled, cat called and made unwanted sexual remarks at me. Not to mention the inappropriate comments some men make from behind a private keyboard on social media. On and on and on. It's all one of the reasons I speak up for the voiceless. #MeToo

## Post 7:



December 14, 2017

Just writing this brings tears to my eyes. It's still so raw to me even if it was two years ago. I was 18 and I started dating this cop I had made at my gas station job after he'd contacted me on Facebook. I'd liked him for so long I couldn't believe he actually liked me. Whenever we'd text he'd always ask me did I want to ride out with him after duty. I turned him down but I finally said yes one night. We we're supposed to stay in town but he took me across state lines when we were only supposed to talk. I was hoarse with a bad cold I even left my glasses but he drove me an hour and thirty minutes from home. He was so off that night and he scared me. He looks scary. He got mad at me and took my phone away from me even before we got to that place. He took his truck down a trail in the woods and parked. We'd talked on the way there. We were still supposed to talk but he wanted more. So many questions race d my head. Did he have a gun? Would he kill me? I kissed him at first but then he started to get serious and I didn't want to. He promised me before we left my house there would be no sex. But he took out a condom and I was speechless and hurt. I froze. He positioned me how he wanted and I was so scared he'd hit me if I said anything. I was a virgin But I thought maybe I should lose it. But no this wasn't right. I told him to please don't hurt me and I pushed his shoulders but he forced himself inside of me. I was so small he couldn't force himself all the way in so I tried to close my legs and I was still pushing him but he told me to open my legs up and I wouldn't do it. So he threw my arm out of the way and he forced my thighs apart with his knees then he forced himself all the way inside of me. It hurt so bad and I cried and spaced out. I just wanted him to stop hurting me but he wouldn't. I just wanted to get home I wanted to live. He looked so evil on top of me I closed my eyes until he was done. I was in so much pain I had purple bruises everywhere. He told me nobody would believe me because we dated and he was a white 23 year old cop and I was an 18 year old black girl. He lied and told me he was 21. He had to drive me back home and he had the audacity to ask me was I still his friend. I had purple bruises down my whole spine from him pressing me so hard against the middle compartment. I was so sore down there and there was blood from where he tore my hymen. I crawled in the middle of my bed at 3a.m. crying myself to sleep because I knew I had lost who I was. He would still come to my job and I'd have to hide I would shake so bad. He would follow me through town if he was on duty and saw me driving. He would drive past my house. And I was always scared he'd pull me over late at night and hurt me again or come to my home and rape me or kill my father. I never got justice and now he's still a cop in another town 45 mins away. He even got an underage girl pregnant and no-one did anything. He hurt so much and he's still respected. Sorry my story was so long. But thank you.

## Post 8:



December 26, 2017

I am fortunate to have a blessed life full of wonderful experiences, great friends and family. I am deliriously happy with my loving husband Mack. My relationships with men are overwhelmingly positive. Yet, I have experienced my own share of sexual assaults and poor treatment. Here are some of them:

-Madrid, Spain 1957 My younger brother and I were being watched by a housemaid when her boyfriend arrived. At one point, while looking at me, he began to touch himself and laugh. He later threw my little brother into the swimming pool and put his foot on his head while laughing and said if I didn't swim over and save my brother he was going to drown him. I did not know how to swim but was able to dog paddle over and get my brother out of the pool. I don't know how I did it.

- Alcalá de Henares, Spain 1958 while playing in the courtyard of a friend's house her grandfather picked her up right in front of me, turned her upside down so that her dress fell back, moved her panties and began to lick her vagina with his tongue while laughing.

-Almost a total loss of memory for a period running from 1959 to 1962 that was caused by something but I don't know what.

-Fort Worth, Texas 1962 The father of my friend next door tried to pull my pants down and spank me one morning while she and I were watching cartoons at her house.

-Mansfield, Texas 1966 A boyfriend tried to force me to have sex with him behind the school but I punched him in the throat and got away. He still passed the rumor around that I had let him do whatever he wanted.

-Summer 1969 I witnessed a pre-teen female cousin being sexually assaulted by a well-liked older uncle. I was just a kid. Fortunately, my father and mother believed me when I told them but they didn't appreciate being told about it. Nothing was ever done to help the girl as far as I know. That same summer while visiting a favorite cousin she advised me that her older brother frequently paid her visits at night and felt of her body. She said she managed to handle it by pretending to be asleep. Since I was staying in her room with her she advised me to do the same if he came in and tried to feel of me. "Just pretend you are sleeping and everything will be okay." (I told her that if he came and tried to touch me I would break his arm and that I would by no means stay quiet about it.)

-Majorca, Spain 1970 My mother and I are sexually assaulted in broad daylight in an area of a public beach by 2 Spanish males who came up to us, began swimming nearby and then sat down on large rocks in front of us, removed their swimsuits and began masturbating and smiling at us.

-From 1971 through 1979 First off, I didn't marry until a few years ago. Back then I was a coed working my way through college. I went on a reasonable number of conventional dates. Most were great experiences. But during that time several dates attempted to force me to have sex with them against my will. All of these guys were seeming nice guys from good families who went to school and/or held down jobs and in every way looked on the outside like normal everyday decent guys. Some were so insistent that they strong-armed me into having sex with them against my will in what is now called "date rape".

-Dallas, Texas 1972-76 Jobs were usually found through the classified ads in town newspapers throughout the U.S. A typical ad regardless of the type of job would read: Office Clerk Wanted. Must type 40 wpm. ONLY Attractive White Female 18-23 years old Height/Weight proportionate need apply.

-Keesler Air Force Base, Biloxi, Mississippi 1973 I was raped by two unknown men on my way to visit the dorm of a girl friend. It was around 7 pm at night with other people not far away. I was advised not to report it and nothing was ever done about it even though there was a rash of rapes going on at the base during that time.

-Richardson, Texas 1979 My postman was delivering the mail in the freezing snow. I had often spoken to him. On this day I had been making bread and had just brewed some tea. I invited him in for a second to have a warm 'cuppa' but when I turn to go back to the kitchen he grabbed me a pulled me to him trying to push me to the ground. With my free right hand I grabbed a giant butcher knife and pushed it under his throat. Looking into his eyes I just said: "let's do this". He screamed and ran out the door. I tried to report him to the police. They referred me to the Postmaster General. They sent 2 investigators who seemed to be enjoying themselves quite a lot asking me to re-enact what occurred as they challenged me at every turn about why I did what I did etc. I learned later that he was not prosecuted or fired but merely assigned to a different zip code. I also learned from the apartment management that the same postman had assaulted over 7 women in my complex alone.

-Dallas, Texas 1979 Right after graduating from university I was starry eyed and optimistic about my future. I approached a company I was particularly interested in working for and set up an interview. But after meeting with the CEO for only a few minutes my prospective employer came around his desk and sat down next to me. He placed his hand on my knee and said I should give up this whole idea of career hunting. He said for the same salary I was asking he would set me up in an apartment, give me a new car and pay me the same amount of money. My face was beet red trying to get back to my car and hold back tears of shame and dismay.

-Dallas, Texas 1984 A former college professor of mine gave me a lift to my bank when my car was in the shop. As we rode along talking about ordinary things I happened to look in his direction and saw that he had taken out his penis while driving and was masturbating and smiling at me. I told him he better put that "thing" away before we had a wreck. I managed to get away without further incident by pretending that nothing out of the ordinary had happened. It was very disturbing.

-San Antonio, Texas 1992 I was working in sales and renting an apartment from an older man whom I knew through my job. It was a temporary arrangement. I was getting ready to move to Dallas the next day when the man knocked on my door. We often talked so I let him in. But he suddenly grabbed me and threw me to the ground. His strength was amazing. Though I tried hard to fight him off he raped me. I never told anyone about it and got away that very night.

I have written about these experiences as way to sort of chronicle what has happened to me over the years in this regard. It is very personal. But I must tell you that there are still some things that have happened to me that I cannot bring myself to share.

I firmly believe that was I to have felt empowered to say no from a young age it could have prevented many of my problems with men especially when it comes to the date rape issue. So many young people male and female come into adulthood not knowing how to say no and feel okay about it.

## Post 9:



October 11, 2017 · 🌐

While studying abroad in [Italy](#), I WAS FOLLOWED by a man who asked me for a cigarette (I have never smoked!) after finishing a call to my family in the US on a pay phone a few blocks from my dormitory. I RAN BACK TO MY DORM.

While visiting and studying yoga in [India](#) a few years ago, I was told by several people that I WOULD BE RAPED if I walked alone on the streets, even in broad daylight.

While walking 10 blocks (~10 mins) to the [MTA New York City Transit](#) subway after the [The Metropolitan Opera](#) last week in [New York, New York, United States](#) my sister, Megan, and I were harassed by 3 DIFFERENT MEN, 3 DIFFERENT TIMES.

I'm not even getting into the multiple times that I have experienced this type of behavior as a performer.

PLEASE STOP SAYING THAT THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN. PLEASE STOP SAYING THIS IS A WOMAN'S ISSUE. PLEASE STOP SAYING THIS IS ONLY A HOLLYWOOD ISSUE. THIS IS A CULTURAL AND GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN EPIDEMIC. Just because you have an attraction or interest in A WOMAN OR A MAN, DOES NOT GIVE YOU ANY RIGHT TO HARASS, BULLY, GRAB, OR ASSAULT THEM IN ANY SEMBLANCE OF THESE WORDS. THIS BEHAVIOR STOPS NOW!

I am proud of the women who have come forward in sharing their stories about their perpetrators, [Bill Cosby](#), [Donald J. Trump](#), and [Harvey Weinstein](#). Keep standing up for yourself, keep sharing, keep believing in justice.

I am also proud of the women and men who have voiced their support amidst the most recent allegations, namely, [Rose McGowan](#), [Lena Dunham](#), [Meryl Streep](#), [Jessica Chastain](#), [Glenn Close](#), [Ashley Judd](#), [Angelina Jolie](#), [Gwyneth Paltrow](#), [Kate Winslet](#), [George Clooney](#), [Seth Meyers](#), [Jimmy Kimmel Live](#), [The Late Show with Stephen Colbert](#), [Last Week Tonight with John Oliver](#), and so many more. We need and appreciate your voices and your support on this issue.

WE ARE A BETTER COUNTRY THAN THIS. WE ARE A BETTER WORLD THAN THIS. LET'S DO BETTER ❤️

[#bethechange](#) [#harveyweinstein](#) [#humanrights](#) [#sexualassault](#)  
[#stoptheviolence](#) [#makeadifference](#) [#WednesdayWisdom](#)  
[#WisdomWednesday](#) [#metoo](#)

## Post 10:



October 17, 2017 · 🌐

in the spirit of #metoo i would like to lend women around the world a hand with a more detailed description of my experience with a danish director . it feels extremely difficult to come out with something of this nature into the public , especially when immediately ridiculed by offenders . i fully sympathise with everyone who hesitates , even for years . but i feel it is the right time especially now when it could make a change . here comes a list of the encounters that i think count as sexual harassment :

1 after each take the director ran up to me and wrapped his arms around me for a long time in front of all crew or alone and stroked me sometimes for minutes against my wishes

2 when after 2 months of this i said he had to stop the touching , he exploded and broke a chair in front of everyone on set . like someone who has always been allowed to fondle his actresses . then we all got sent home .

3 during the whole filming process there were constant awkward paralysing unwanted whispered sexual offers from him with graphic descriptions , sometimes with his wife standing next to us .

4 while filming in sweden , he threatened to climb from his room ´s balcony over to mine in the middle of the night with a clear sexual intention , while his wife was in the room next door . i escaped to my friends room . this was what finally woke me up to the severity of all this and made me stand my ground

5 fabricated stories in the press about me being difficult by his producer . this matches beautifully the weinstein methods and bullying . i have never eaten a shirt . not sure that is even possible .

6 i didnt comply or agree on being sexually harassed . that was then portrayed as me being difficult . if being difficult is standing up to being treated like that , i´ll own it .

hope

let´s break this curse

warmth

björk

## Post 11:



October 21, 2017 · 🌐

Me too.

I remember it like it was yesterday. Sadly, it's not my only #metoo.

7th grade in the hallway walking to Health Class with my best friend.

Leading up to that moment. He had ran past me twice and grabbed my butt, walked up behind me at my locker and grabbed my boob, and made really inappropriate comments for anyone let alone a 7th grader to even say. I felt so incredibly small. Like I couldn't even raise my voice to say a thing out of my mouth.

I was just trying to live my life + get through those weird transitional years where I was way taller than all of the guys.

In those moments I lost my voice.

I wanted to make this light hearted because it does not define me, but empowers me to SHARE more than ever on the platform that I help to women everyday to know their worth, how strong they are, and they are not defined by their past.

Back to the story ...

7th grade. Hallway. Walking to Health Class.

After all of the grabbing and name calling happened (earlier that day). I was walking to Health Class up the stairs with my best friend Ashley.

Ironically, we were learning all about Sexual Harassment ... He and his friends stopped us and asked me, "If I would 'go out' with so and so". I quickly said, "no" and we walked up the stairs.

What came next was the reason I told someone about everything happening ...

He grabbed my arm/armpit and said, "If you tell anyone I'll kill you"

We walked to class and we told our teacher.

I remember holding back tears.

Feeling so violated and feeling like I did something wrong.

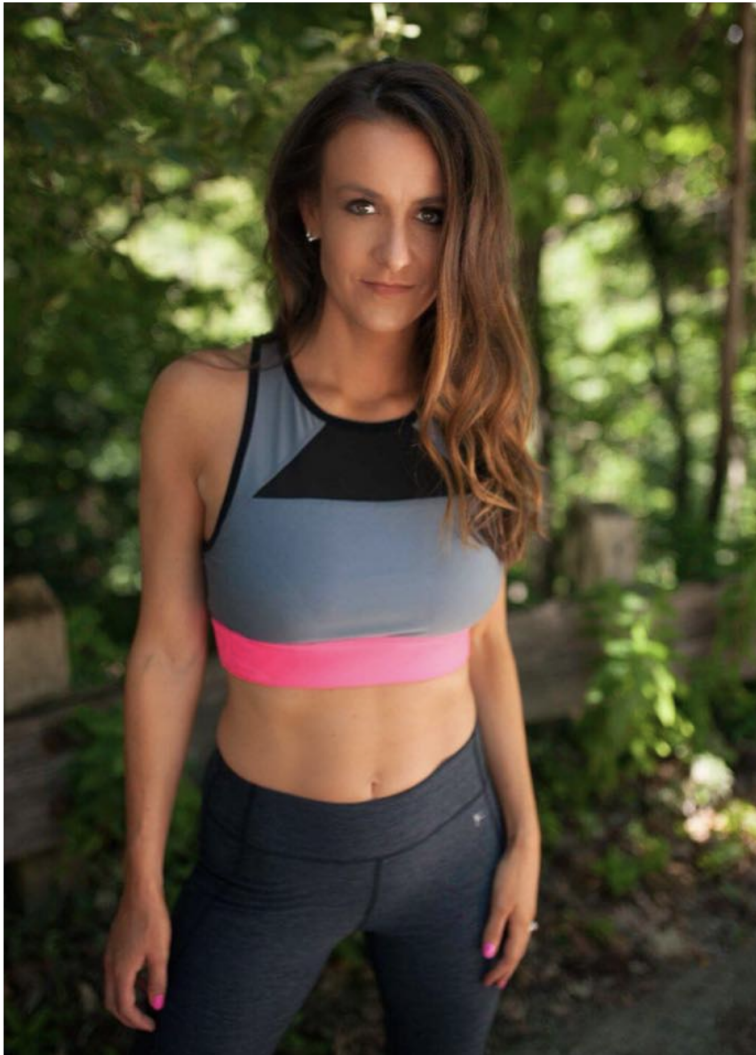
Thinking back, how it took him threatening my LIFE for me to feel justified to tell someone.

Let's just say, I remember that moment forever in my heart, the feeling I felt, and honestly I don't know what I would do if my best friend wasn't right there with me.

She gave me her strength when I felt like I didn't have any. Next, the school talked with him. After that, I learned even more how much of a Bad Ass/powerful mom I have. She didn't let "we'll talk to him" go by from the teachers/admins at the school.

Thanks Mom ([Karen](#)) for always showing me that THIS is not right or tolerated.

Regardless of severity on any spectrum the principal had placed it. It is wrong.





Post 12:



October 21, 2017 · 🌐

#metoo...TW:sexual assault

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Those who know Dominic Onwe should know that he is someone who is not afraid to push boundaries. Three years ago, he woke me up after a night of drinking and having sex and asked to go again and I said no because I had work in a few hours. He kept pushing and I finally gave in, and told him to use a condom. He did not. The next day I told him that what he had done was unacceptable and we were no longer friends. I chose not to press charges, even when the doctor who ran a pregnancy/STD/HIV test asked if I wanted to. I didn't call it rape for a long time. I went through therapy, and I dealt with it, I know I am not to blame for someone else hurting me. For three years, I kept this mostly a secret, but in the last week I've seen so many of my friends, family, and peers sharing #metoo, and it's time. Dominic, and every person like you, go fuck yourself.

Post 16:



MeToo

October 18, 2017 · 🌐



I apologize if it's too graphic. But here is my story.

I am a gay man who was physically and sexually abused by my high school boyfriend. He was a bit older than me and everything was good at first...later on he started getting aggressive and abusive...he would try to sell me to his friends for them to use. I was so stupid but every time I tried to get out he would hunt me down and drag me back into that hell hole of his life. I finally stood up for myself..which ended up being the worst experience of my life. He knocked me out and when I came too his friends all took turns abusing me and my ex kept yelling at me saying "you deserve all the abuse, this is what you get when you say no." All I could do was stare at the light and pray it would be over soon. I blacked out from the punches and the pain and I woke up in the ICU.

One of his neighbors came to my hospital room and said that when he was walking his dog he found me in a ditch bruised and bleeding. My ex had taken a crow bar and beaten me and broken most of my ribs, my pelvis and my skull in three places. I still have flashbacks and panic attacks. The pain and scars are still there, I still have trust issues and I'm searching for a man who is a gentleman and kind. But my past always gets in the way and messes everything up.

#MeToo

## Post 18:

 October 17, 2017 · 🌐

I saw this powerful hashtag #metoo yesterday being spread and shared to raise awareness about sexual harrasment. How people come together, show support and break the silence together! This is so important. Meanwhile reading those posts I thought for a second, "I have never been sexually harrasment" WAIT a second, I have. I remember this so clear now and I almost forgot about it! At 18 years old I wanted to see the world, throw myself out there and experience everything the world could offer. A 4 month trip with my backpack as my only company I was ready and filled with excitement. It came down to my last night in New Zealand when I arrived to my shared hostelroom and a guy came up to me telling me I was his next victim to rape. I was in shock and not sure if I heard right, I felt ashamed and didn't want to go change room - I remember I thought it was probably my own thoughts playing a game. I went to bed and recieved the next threat, he pulled my hair so hard to get closer to my ear and wispered "you are not safe when I come back". All I knew was that I wanted to sleep with a knife under my pillow that night. Nothing ever happened, he didn't come back and I was safe. But the glimpse of this feeling was enough, shame and deep fear was there. This or any other sexual harrasment is NEVER ok, never. Thank you all amazing humans who share this important hashtag to break the silence, create space and inspires also me to be brave and share this. #metoo



## Post 19:



October 17, 2017 · 🌐

[#MeToo](#)

I'm not sure if I'm serving the purpose of this movement by sharing what happened with me back in 2010 but its something I've carried with me for a long time and this is a way of me venting.

It was the Finals of Mumbai Indians v/s Chennai Super Kings in 2010 & like any other excited 15 year old teenager I was at the DY Patil Stadium along with my family & family friends to witness that nail biting match.

I dont remember the exact moment but I believe it was a boundary that a Mumbai Indians cricketer hit & I stood on top of the chair to cheer along with my cousins. All of a sudden I felt someone's hands from behind touching me in places that no 15 year old or a non-consenting woman should be touched. I was shocked & honestly I did not know how to react so I decided to let it go. And to my horror, it happened again. This time I started crying & told my parents about it. The next thing I know, my brothers were hitting him & the police got involved. They heard me & took that disgusting human being out of the stadium.

But what I can never forget is how he looked at me while being taken away. That look of hate, revenge, like he was going to come back for me.

If I wanted, I could've let this situation change me as a person.

But, I never let it. I mean why would I let a creep take control of my life or freedom?

Since that day I decided to not give in to fear or panic.

I travel in the city as per my own wish at whatever hour I feel comfortable with. I go wherever I wish to go. I hang out with whoever I wish to hang out with, at whatever time I want to. Not because I want to prove a point but because I choose to not let any human or gender or any being take control of me or my power.

[#DoNotLetItGo](#)

## Post 20:



October 16, 2017 · 🌐

WARNING: this was very difficult for me to post.

I've never been one to post negative or extremely personal issues on social media, but I'm finally ready to state this publicly. I am the SURVIVOR of physical, emotional, mental, and sexual abuse from a two year relationship with a "boy" who will remain nameless. For a long time I blamed myself for not being the perfect girlfriend and he punished me repeatedly. I probably only weighed about 100 pounds at 5'7" for the longest time because I was too stressed to eat. I'm not posting this for pity or attention, but to acknowledge that this kind of abuse can happen to anyone. I come from a good family and had amazing friends, so I didn't fit the normal "type" of person who would fall into this kind of relationship.

As of now, I'm in a healthy relationship, have incredible friends and a supportive family. I deal with the PTSD from that portion of my life daily, but it no longer controls me. I am not broken because of this.

If anyone ever wants to discuss their situation, I'm there for you. Stay strong. [#MeToo](#)

Post 21:

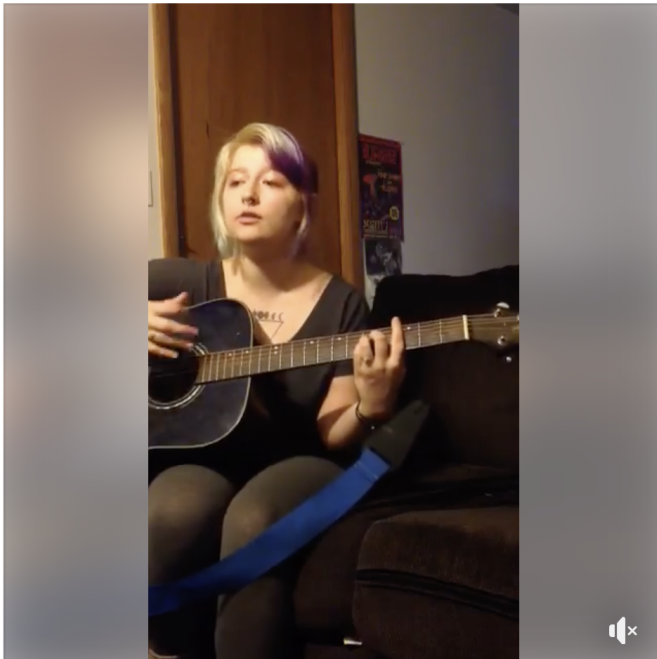
 October 16, 2017 · 🌐

#metoo

Here's one of the MANY times I felt degraded by a man: It is burned into my brain. I remember I was alone at Celebrate Erie, it was 8 days before I turned 18. I remember leaving the house and feeling particularly good about my appearance, which, as we all know, self-love ain't easy. as I walked through the crowds of people there were at least 15 different dudes who either looked me up and down and gave me a head nod, or who said typical, stupid fucking catcalls. At one point there was a group of 3 dudes who started to follow me and harass me. Asking things like "how old are you?" Etc Naively, I said I'll be 18 in 8 days. One of them responded with "Your parents let you dress like THAT???" And another with "can I call you in 8 days???"

I was literally speed walking away from them as they continued to harass me and make me feel like i shouldn't be able to dress how I want to. I finally got to the point where I turned around, and told them to fuck right off and leave me alone. I think I remember this situation so clearly because it was the first time I stood up for myself in that kind of situation. Especially alone. Later on that day, I was with a group of people walking through Celebrate Erie and it was ridiculous how because I was in with a group of people, not as many dudes preyed on me. It's really unfortunate that as a lady, if I want to feel safer, I have to be with a whole group of people. I am very lucky that I haven't had much worse than someone catcalling me--but I shouldn't have to say I'm lucky. I shouldn't have to worry about being preyed upon by some asshole who straight up thinks he's complimenting me by saying I have a nice ass etc

So, dear survivors and future survivors: you are strong, and I am here for you 💖💎⚡ here is my song Catcalling, dedicated to you.



## Post 23:



October 16, 2017 · Jakarta, Indonesia · 🌐

#metoo

It is not something I normally talk about and thought twice about it. Should I post? I am not a woman. I already experienced going public being on the front cover of The Age in 1997, television interviews and the often "sensation only" interest from the media - rather than concerns with the issue. I was offered to do a documentary by RTL - but their interest was purely sensation and drama. But like then in context of friends I did not know had the experience - seeing their posts, it reiterates how important it is to show solidarity with targets as well as raise awareness. On one occasion I was 18 and drugged by the 72 year old Bob Magoo, a millionaire, owner of Hawaiian Airlines and one of the last members of the royal Hawaiian family. Waking up with a blistering headache in a bed in the with a scruffy beard on my face - drugs starting wear off - I was confronted with a challenge that required a lot of inner strength. It was a big test of Self. I could hardly walk. I made my way out of his palace - only saying "I do NOT need help. I walked a few hundred meters -then sat on the curb. I remember thinking: "You could go to the police and report him, sue him. But the prospect of telling others was not an option. Shame. Pain. "Now you can really let this mess you up - don't." He abused while I was unconscious. You were not present - only your body was and you know you are not your body. Put those philosophy and Wayne Dyer books you read a few years ago to work."

I started getting flashbacks of him trying to manouvre my lifeless 70 kg body. I accepted the whole experience then - stopped mulling over it and managed to give it a place right there. 30 years later I realize however that unconsciously it would have had an impact - when meeting a psychologist.

On another occasion I was 29 and was able to defend myself. For the sake of others, especially children I took a tough decision to go public when 29 about Sai Baba - and met a lot of resistance from humans that vilified me and other targets of Sai Baba's deprivation. I NEVER - from hours of the occurrence when I was 18 - considered myself a victim. From when it happened I decided that I was not and would never use the language of victim as I feared it would have a negative impact on a healthy sense of self. So - I am with those who had to suffer that I know and those I don't, and those that are still suffering - the ones I know off and the ones I don't. It's why I was proud to work on the movie Untuk Angeline which addresses the widely spread issue - widely hidden issue - globally. What never failed to perplex me was that the environment of the targets often adds insult to injury by refusing or even attacking the abuse targets. Despite facts. And a lot of the deviants have found a perfect hiding place in religion. Humanity still has a lot to learn. My heart goes out to all targets of abuse.

## Post 24:



December 15, 2017

#mentoo #metoo I've been debating whether to say this, fearing possible retaliation. It's might not be popular or well received, but I want to say something. I know I received so much support for my story and I love y'all for that.

The not believing problem is especially bad for male victims such as myself. I have listened to so many men and women say that men can't be victims. I can't say I've ever heard of a case where people actually believed the man off the bat.

Recently in one of my CJ classes, I said " he or she" in regards to sex crime victims and a woman blatantly said that men can't be victims. Her reasoning was that men always enjoy it when a woman forces herself on him and that it be can't be rape since the woman has to use a tool to threaten and overpower. Obviously, this really upset me, I cried in front of my class and mentor as I argued.

A few weeks prior at my campus a male student was groped and no one believed him. So many people called him a liar and said it was for attention. I felt so bad for him and backed him every chance I got.

During the summer at work, I wore shorts(I work outside and was within dress code) for the first time and two female coworkers started touching my legs all over, above and below the knees without consent. I got upset and they were baffled on why I reacted like that. I told a male coworker and he said that I should've enjoyed it because they were 'attracted' to me.

This has been eating at me for awhile and I just wanted to get it off my chest.

Post 25:



November 22, 2017

A conversation with my rapist...

January 19, 1989. I was 19 and a sophomore in college. I was a young sophomore because I started college at 17, but I was independent, fearless and didn't care whether people liked me, my hair or my clothes. I didn't blend in and I wasn't a follower. My personality was not much different than it is now- opinionated, stubborn and at times, a little defiant.

It was drizzling, and I was rushing to get to my lunch date with my boyfriend, who, in perfect nerd fashion, had formally asked me to be his girlfriend the previous day. I hurried past a group of guys hanging out in the quad -the center of campus situated between four academic buildings- which included the campus bully, an intimidating football player and member of a popular fraternity. I often went out of my way to avoid him. He was loud, obnoxious and never passed up an opportunity to humiliate someone. This day was no different. As I passed him and his fraternity brothers, I did a generic, all-inclusive wave and tried to make it clear that I was on a mission. Destination: Jones Hall, the cafeteria where my boyfriend was waiting. I was almost in the clear, when I heard my name, "FRAN!" It was him. Yelling for me to come back, demanding to know why I was in such a hurry and what was more important than acknowledging him in a "proper, respectful" way. This was typical behavior for him. I told him I was late meeting my new boyfriend ("mistake" number one), and that I really needed to go. His response was: "Fuck him, he can wait!" I rolled my eyes and started to walk away ("mistake" number two). The guys laughed and he grabbed my arm and said: "You need to learn to be more respectful." At 5'5" and barely 110 pounds I was no match for him. He was 5'11", 240 pounds and built like a brick. He picked me up, flung me over his shoulder and started to walk toward his vehicle, which was illegally parked on campus almost daily. As I screamed for him to put me down, the guys continued to laugh and eventually went their separate ways.

He threw me into his truck from the driver's side, and by the time I made it across the passenger seat to the other door, he was driving down the hill. I demanded he stop the truck. He said I had two options: apologize for being disrespectful or jump out of the moving vehicle. I chose neither, and unleashed a profanity-laced tirade insisting that he turn around and return me to campus IMMEDIATELY! My demands were ignored as he drove farther away from campus, lecturing me on how I could have made the situation so much easier by being respectful and simply apologizing. I was unamused, angry and defiant, growing more upset at the thought that my boyfriend was waiting for me, assuming I had stood him up. It's 1989 and there are no cell phones. I can't text or call him. Or anyone else.

We arrived at an off-campus trailer (I learned later that he lived with a police officer) and I refused to get out of the truck. He reminded me that it's this same defiant attitude that created this situation in the first place. I ignore him, arms folded, staring straight ahead. He tells me that he needs to go inside to get a few things, promises to return me to campus and strongly suggests that I get out of the truck. I refuse. He walks around to the passenger side and pulls me out, picking me up and cradling me like a baby. He holds me over a large puddle of water, and again demands that I apologize for my "bad attitude." I respond with, "Go f— yourself! Put me down, NOW!" He complies and drops me. I'm covered in mud. He laughs, and feeling defeated, I start to cry. For a brief moment I see what appears to be compassion as he helps me up and says: "I'm sorry, I was just messing with you. I don't want your boyfriend to kick my ass, so come on, and get up. I'll give you some sweats to change into and I'll take you back to campus." I believed him ("mistake" number three). After all, he wasn't a complete stranger, he was just the campus bully- a jerk, a prankster with a mean streak who targeted both, guys and girls.

I stepped into the trailer and he handed me a pair of oversized university sweatpants, a matching sweatshirt and said I could change in the bathroom. I changed, grabbed my pile of wet clothes and as I exited the bathroom, I was face to face with him. I smiled uncomfortably and said "Ok, I'm ready. Let's go." He said: "Say thank you." I smirked and responded sarcastically: "Ooh kaay...thank you." I'm pretty sure I rolled my eyes ("mistake" number four). He pinned me against the wall and tried to kiss me. I turned my head and tried to slide past him. He grabbed me, forced me onto the bed, aggressively pulled off my sweatpants and brutality assaulted me. I screamed and begged him to stop, and he told me that I needed to stop playing hard to get and that it would feel better if I didn't resist. I fought, but lost.

How I got back to the truck is unclear. I don't recall the conversation on the ride back to campus and I don't remember him escorting me to my dorm room, but there I was...and so was he. My roommate was frantic, worried about where I had been because my boyfriend had come by repeatedly looking for me. As I was about to explain, my rapist interjected and told her that I had been disrespectful and needed to be taught a lesson. I verbally lashed out at him, feeling a sense of safety in the presence of my roommate. I was wrong. He said: "There she goes again. She hasn't learned anything." He removed the belt he was wearing, grabbed me like a small child, put me over his knee and struck me on my legs several times. My roommate yelled at him to stop and he laughed, sat me up and as he left our room, pointed at me and said: "Behave yourself."

My boyfriend arrived later and asked what happened to me, why I was a no-show at lunch. I was embarrassed and traumatized, but I told myself that I could never let him know that I had allowed myself to be raped. There were visible marks on my legs from the belt so there was no getting around that. My roommate and I explained that the campus bully (unbeknownst to him, now also a rapist) was responsible. My boyfriend stormed out of the room and I later found out that he had driven to the trailer and confronted my rapist with a baseball bat. The following day I received a call: "Tell your boyfriend that the next time he decides to confront me, he better bring a gun, because I will shoot his ass."



In the months following, my rapist was confident that I hadn't shared his crime with my boyfriend or anyone else. Not even my roommate. However, as a means of additional "insurance" he initiated a friendship with my boyfriend, which began with an apology for the "spanking incident." An apology to my boyfriend.

We occasionally had superficial interactions with my rapist which finally ended when my rapist graduated and my boyfriend and I broke up. The following year, he graduated and was drafted by the NFL. I continued my education at the university, graduating in 1992.

I told myself that their friendship would never last. After all, the threat (me) had been eliminated.

A few years after I graduated, my ex-boyfriend and I reconnected as friends. We became Facebook friends and connected on LinkedIn.

In 1999, a college classmate shared that my ex-boyfriend and my rapist were business partners. I finally mustered up the courage to tell him what I had kept secret for 10 years. I felt that he deserved to know that he was doing business with a sexual predator. I told him my story and his response was shock and compassion. He was supportive and said that he wished I'd had the courage to tell him when it happened, and then glossed over his business partnership as a onetime investment rather than a long-term relationship. I was relieved.

Over the years, I have relived the experience in my mind more times than I can count. In 2016, I called my ex-boyfriend to discuss my need to confront my rapist. He advised against it. It was then that I learned of their continued business and personal relationship. Despite his glowing endorsement of my rapist who had become a family man, attended church and joined him on family vacations, he also expressed concern for my well-being and safety. He reminded me of how well-connected and powerful my rapist was and that he had the ability and the means to "destroy" me.

He had quite the resume: From campus bully and rapist to semi-professional football player to CEO to University Board Member. Our university.

We continued our discussion via text message as he encouraged me to "heal internally" and expressed concern for what my "allegation" could do to the rapist's reputation, business and family. The conversation went from "I'm really sorry this happened to you and that it still impacts you" to "after weighing what I know about him today, the conclusion is that it is unprovable and unknowable." With that, our contact and friendship ended. I was devastated. The one person who was my protector for two and a half years in college and a supportive friend in the years after, was sounding like a misogynistic assclown.

On November 13, 2017, after confiding in two of my close friends (a man and a woman) I decided to contact my rapist, and prepared myself for it to go one of two ways: 1. He would respond, be accountable, accept responsibility, apologize and acknowledge that he was a bully in college who made awful decisions that he regretted and has spent the last 28 years becoming a better person, remorseful for any pain he may have caused. Or 2. He would ignore my message and pretend that it ever happened.

It was both: He responded and he pretended it never happened.

I sent a message via LinkedIn and within seconds I received a reply. It was simple: "Hi Francesca. Thanks for reaching out! I'm open to talk.", and he provided his cell phone number. I was hopeful as I've been told that I am an eternal optimist often giving the benefit of the doubt to people who are undeserving. I didn't call right away. In fact, I drove around my neighborhood nervously and eventually parked in a church parking lot. I sat in my car for about an hour before I finally decided to call. I'd had 28 years to think about what I would say, except that I never imagined I would actually get a chance to say it to the person who raped and physically abused me. I finally called, and he answered on the first ring. He said: "Hello Fran. How are you?" My heart was racing. Suddenly, I was 19 again. I answered, "I'm okay." And he said: "It doesn't sound like you're okay." And I responded: "You're right. I'm not."

I took a deep breath and explained how difficult it was for me to make this phone call. He asked why, as if he didn't know the reason for my call. I said that what happened in 1989 had a profound impact on me and shaped the person I had become and that as the mother of daughters, I would never want them to go through what I experienced. He sat silently as if he was waiting for me to enlighten him on the details. I started to recall the moment I was walking through the quad and he interjected "Oh! You mean that time I was teasing you and dropped you in the water?" Suddenly he remembered the exact day.

He remembered stopping me.

He remembered giving me a hard time.

He remembered throwing me over his shoulder and carrying me to his truck.

He remembered dropping me in the mud and offering me a change of clothes.

He even remembered using his belt to "spank" me and getting confronted by my then-boyfriend with a baseball bat. He also remembered apologizing (to my boyfriend), saying that he didn't know I was his girlfriend, as if to say that a single girl was fair game. What he didn't remember was cornering me and sexually assaulting me. That part, he conveniently did not remember. His voice was calm and confident, almost compassionate. He mentioned that he had heard my story before, from other people, asking him if it was true. He said that he had never touched me in a sexual way because he "could never do that to his boy", so I reminded him that 1. He and my boyfriend were not friends at the time, and 2. His apology (excuse) to my boyfriend was that he had no idea I was his girlfriend.

Then, the bully emerged.

#1: Intimidation & Shaming. He said that during his recent conversations about me with former classmates, he recalled I was promiscuous, and that now, after hearing the story directly from me, he would need to consider going back to those people to get "documentation" of my promiscuity. So I told him that I would gladly provide him with a list of all my sexual partners, because the simple fact was that I chose to sleep with those people. He, however, raped me.

#2: Victim Blaming. "Why didn't you ever come to me and talk to me about this back then?" I responded: "Quite honestly, I was 19 and you were extremely intimidating and I was absolutely terrified of you." I purposely spoke in past tense. The truth is I did blame myself for providing him with information that ultimately motivated him that day: I made it clear that I was unavailable, spoken for, taken, and completely uninterested in him.

#3: Invincibility. When I realized that the conversation was not going in the direction of an acknowledgement or an apology, I assured him that my intention was not to ruin his life, his family or his career. That I simply needed closure and an apology would do that for me. He laughed, apologized (for laughing), and said: "I can't apologize for something I don't remember, and I'm definitely not worried."

And finally, #4 Manipulation. At the end of our 19 minute conversation, I said I appreciated him taking my call. And, that despite his claim of not remembering, I would never forget. He responded: "Hey Fran, I want you to know that if anyone ever mentions your name to me in the future, I will always tell them that you're a good person and that I always considered you a friend."

Thank you for the endorsement. To me, you will always be a rapist.

[#metoo](#) [#iwillnotbesilenced](#)



👍 Like

➦ Share

## Post 26:



October 16, 2017 · New York

## #MeToo

It all started when I was 5. My mom said that me and brother had to sleep over her friends house. I woke up to her friends son touching my private. I cried and he left me alone because there was other ppl in the room.

The next time my grandfather's friend pinned me up in a hallway, when I was coming outside to play and aggressively, rubbed his self on me until this sticky stuff was running down my leg. I was so scared. He told me I better not open my mouth or he would kill my brother.. A short time went by, One day I was with gramps and he walked up , I guess my eyes and the fact that I pee'd on my self while standing there was a signal for my gramps, because when he took me to change my clothes, he asked me why did I do that? I started crying and told him what had happened. My gramps grabbed his ice pick and told me he'd be back. I just kept hearing my Great Grand Ma saying " My only son is going spend the rest of his life in jail". My gramps stabbed that man 40+ times with that ice pick... he died, but not immediately... I remember not seeing my gramps through the rest of my younger years until I was abt 12 When he came home. My gramps died in '97. I have been raped since then, in my adult life but I never mentioned it until now , because I always felt by me telling, It caused someone to lose their life. I didn't want the same thing to happen again with the Males in my family by telling. I suppress it, but sometimes I see it in my dreams, or relive it while I'm driving, talking , walking or just having a quiet moment with too much time to on my hands to think..

Thanks for letting me share ❤️

## Post 27:



November 16, 2017

#Metoo I was sixteen, just started high school. I should stay over for the weekend with my rather new boy friend. He identified himself with a cristian cultural belief in which sex before marriage was not ok. So we didn't do that, but kissing and hugging were ok. And it seemed obviously to be ok to sleep together. We spent a lovely afternoon walking in the countryside, and had dinner with his family. Then we went to his room, where he raped me. I protested and try to get him off me but he was stronger than me. The sudden turn from confidentiality and nearness to violent abuse paralyzed me in feelings of chok, shame, guilt and sorrow. I went into another room where i stayed until I was to be picked up the following afternoon. We never spoke again. It was strange and incriminating to be in the same everyday small circles of the high school, where he was socializing with my friends. The paralysis turned slowly into a sort of amnesia, and I didn't tell anybody until a psychotherapist helped me twelve years after.

The rape and the fact that I kept it to myself had a deep influence on my life for very long. It made me feel lonely and outcast, and made it difficult for me to be my true self in relations with men, to feel worthy, free and confident. I wish I would have stood up for myself back then, and I hope for every other girl and woman that they will stand up for them selves and each other!

## Post 28:



October 20, 2017 · 🌐

It's a lot easier to share this with a room full of strangers than everyone I know on the internet, but here's to stepping outside my comfort zone with a wildly personal bit of spoken word on [#metoo](#)

Some background. It happened to me too.

At 17, by a 'friend' who didn't like when I said no and held my ground, argued with me and then decided that once I was too drunk to object, no didn't count.

At 18, when I woke up pinned down by an acquaintance I'd flirted with. I couldn't handle going through that emotional hell all over again, so I froze until it was over and pretended it never happened.

At 20, by the highly respected, married-with-kids mentor who gave false pretenses of drinks with other top executives in a field I was interested in. He said he 'hoped I wouldn't let this spoil the professional relationship' when I asked that he never contact me again.

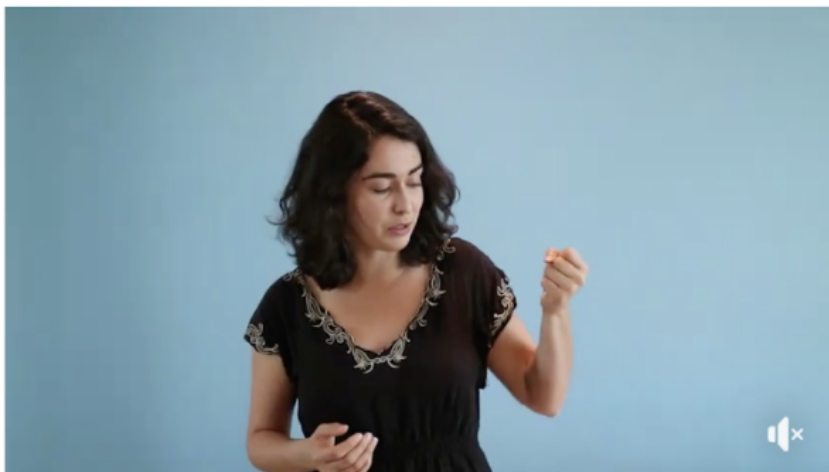
I could tell you about the years of nightmares, anxiety attacks, self-medication and physical health complications. Years where every intimate encounter was either inebriated or followed by debilitating anxiety. Every way in which I blamed it on myself – other people had it way worse, I shouldn't have drank so much, I should've fought it off, I should've seen it coming.

But what I really want to say is, for all the #metoo's spoken and unspoken, I see you. You don't owe anyone your story, and the horrors of others' experiences don't make yours any less valid or important.

It doesn't matter if you could have done more to stop it, it's still not your fault.

Most of all, I want you to know that – despite what it may feel like – if someone violated you, that doesn't make you any less worthy. Not even a little bit.

If you ever need support, I'm here xx



Post 31:



October 25, 2017 · 🌐

#metoo story below:

In the midst of all the sexual assault claims that are coming out, I've been noticing a shockingly large number of comments that defend violating behavior. "That's what happens when you go to someone's room", "touching isn't really assault", "if they were assaulted then why did they wait so long", etc etc. If this is the way you think, YOU are victim blaming. And YOU are a shitty person. Women's bodies are not open game for ANY kind of predatory behavior. Your explanations and excuses do not fucking matter.

A few years ago, I was working as a hostess in the VIP room of the US Open. This was where many celebrities & wealthy people watched the tournament. During a match, I was cleaning up the snack table while everyone was on the balcony watching the game, when all of a sudden I felt a hand on the upper part of my butt cheek. I turned around quickly and was standing face to face with [Alec Baldwin](#) (oh yes, that guy who is so good at playing Donald "grab her by the pussy" Trump - how apropos). He said "oh excuse me", and acted as if he was just trying to squeeze by me. As if he just couldn't reach those M&M's without first quietly sneaking up behind me and touching my ass. We were the only people. There was plenty of room. There was NO reason for him to touch me. I stood there feeling shocked. I bring this up to say this: my body was touched without my permission. I was violated. It doesn't matter how "small" that violation was - it was sexual assault. I beat myself up for a long time over not getting real redneck on his ass, and throwing hot coffee in his face. But the fact is, no matter how tough I like to think I am, in the face of even the slightest violation of my body - I felt so very tiny.

This isn't "pick the definition of sexual assault/harrasment that works best for you." This has happened to #metoo ..... and your mothers, your sisters, your aunts, your grandmas, your nieces, your friends. In both very big and very small ways. If women started telling you all the ways in which we have just 'been touched for no reason', the stories would literally never end. BODY AUTONOMY - learn the phrase. Keep your hands to yourselves, you creeps.

Oh, and this most definitely IS a mother fucking WITCH HUNT, [Woody Allen](#).

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Post 32:



December 18, 2017 · 🌐

Before this story seeps into my 2018, allow me to share my [#metoo](#) story.

This year is coming to an end. And of all the things that I wanted to let go of this year, there is one thing that I haven't yet released: fear.

I haven't shared his name because I was afraid of his retaliation. But today, I am letting go of that fear. I want to put this story behind me once and for all. As an essential step to my healing, I am aching for this story to stop consuming me and making me feel defeated and afraid.

In addition to much information relayed to me that I have no right to publicize myself, two women, who were students at the times of the incidents, contacted me after they became aware of my experience with their own experiences with him, which I found chilling, as well as a woman from the community who told me that she was afraid of speaking of what he did to her. This further intensified my need to publicize his name, even though I am still afraid of the implications of that. But the weight of these stories is heavier than my fear.

I do not want to be afraid anymore.

Fear of his reaction and fear of disappointing him was the theme of this whole experience. I first feared his reaction at me rejecting his inappropriate comments. I then feared his reaction at me rejecting his advances at getting closer to me on a personal level. And when I developed an attachment to him, I feared what that meant. When I told him that I didn't think it would work out, I feared disappointing him or making him feel like I gave up on him. And when I struggled with that, I feared what he would say about me within our professional and community circles. When he manipulated me to take money from me, I feared what exposing that would mean. When I spoke up, I feared his possible retaliation. I currently fear the consequences of continuing to try to be heard.

So today, I am letting go of my fear. I already allowed this story to carry into my 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017. I will not allow it to carry into my 2018.

His name is Michael Deeb. He holds multiple positions of power.

I have experienced forms of power abuse, gendered violence and financial abuse from Mr. Deeb, a man who, in such high positions of power, is held to the highest level of trust and respect. I have no doubt that his behavior is unbecoming of a person who holds the positions of power that he does. I've struggled with naming this whole experience. I wonder, is it sexual harassment? Is it power abuse? Is it emotional and financial exploitation? Is it implanting fear and intimidation? Is it psychological manipulation? Or is it a bit of everything? What do I have the right to name it?

The following sums up my experience with him:

- He pursued a personal relationship with me while expending strong interest and effort in assisting me with my future endeavours. This began with him requesting for over a period of about a year and a half that I tutor his children. Upon me accepting, he began to make inappropriate comments which he ought to have known were inappropriate, given our shared cultural and religious beliefs. For example, during a meeting, he asked me what perfume I was wearing. He provided me with his personal phone number and frequently messaged me late at night. He was suggestive and aggressive with his personal interest in me, indicating his weakness around me, and his interest in a closer relationship with me knowing how pressured and conflicted that was making me feel. I do not perceive this as amounting to anything less than sexual harassment. True, for a long time, I did not directly say "no", but I did not say "yes" either. In fact, I made it clear to him at many points how uncomfortable and conflicted his comments made me feel.

- I admit to developing a strong emotional attachment and dependency on him overtime, which I certainly struggled with. At one point, I gave him a deeply emotional hand-written letter, which I still partly feel shame for. That did not give him the right to take advantage of me. But unfortunately, he did, manipulatively asking for money in February and April of 2015, while he held power over me, after I had indicated to him my wish to stop contacting him. He also withheld my money from me for several months, telling me anytime I asked him for it that if I ever contacted him again, I would be sorry.

- He, at many instances, broke professional boundaries when he pleased and drew them when it served his own purpose.

- He contacted members of my family and my family doctor which I perceived as an attempt to shame and intimidate me.

And before you, whoever you are, jump in to explain to me what "sexual harassment" means, I encourage you to read the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal's definition here: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/.../pol.../2-identifying-sexual-harassment>

Many of you might be wondering why I am not sharing more information. I ask you to trust that I have done my part in attempting to resolve this case and any information that I withhold is for valid reasons. I am sharing this for my own healing and for me to no longer feel silenced or afraid. And it's simple. You either believe me or you don't.



I blame my vulnerability, lack of experience and lack of self-worth for allowing his aggressive attention to make me develop a dependency on him. I also blame my goodness, which always reminded me that I should give him a chance because if I didn't, I wouldn't be humble or grateful to what he'd done for me. I felt like I owed him something because he had offered to help me when he didn't have to. And because of that, I carried so much of the blame for so long. I felt an incessant need to "fix" things and take them back to normal between us, not realizing that this was never "normal." The longer I did that, the longer the emotional abuse, berating and humiliation took place. Whether he intended it or not, the psychological manipulation I experienced and made him aware of left me with trauma that I am still healing from.

This is just a portrayal of my experience from one angle. I have been also affected from social, cultural, religious, and health angles- not to mention the number of people who worked to tarnish my reputation while knowing very well that I was the victim of this abuse. But as the woman, I am to blame.

Many might think that this happens every day. Men pursue women every day, right? Believe me when I tell you that I struggled with this myself. I was 22 years old when he first laid his eyes on me. He was double my age at the time. In other words, the day that I was born, he was my age when he started pursuing me. Over a period of about a year and a half, he sought me out to tutor his children. Four times. He asked me four times. Three times, I said no. Out of desperation to get a job, I said yes. Initially, he was the one who expressed in different ways his interest in me over, and over. I was inexperienced and extremely vulnerable at that point, which he was aware of. There was imbalance of age, power, responsibility, maturity and understanding of boundaries. He was persistent with his attention and did not seem to accept any attempt from me to dissuade the comments or requests that he knew made me uncomfortable. I perceived his behaviour as imposing control over our interactions to what suited what he wanted. I didn't feel that I had a choice with no consequence upon myself, because when there is pressure coupled with an imbalance of power, there can never really be full consent- to anything.

He was aware what cultural and religious boundaries he was crossing from the start. He did it anyway and continued with his pursuance, knowing the weight of the place that was taking in my life. I would have never been prompted to view him as a potential partner in a situation void of me feeling indebted to him for what he'd helped me with.

I was in a vulnerable position and he knew how I perceived the weight of his position. After much contemplation and letting go of my naivety, it is my belief that he either wanted sex or money. He knew that he could not get the former and went after the latter until he could no longer get it, then disposed of me. In my view, that was very manipulative and unfair. I struggled with this longer than I believe anyone should because I took the blame for his behaviour and the change of it. From my knowledge of him, he banked on the fact that I would fear for my reputation, that I stepped out of my character and would be ashamed, and that I feared professional implications.

I will not be one of the women who in thirty years says, I wish I came  
K CERPTS - Google Docs [raid. I will not be one of the women who is  
silenced for the rest of her life out of fear of what everyone around her  
might think. Out of fear of losing her job. Out of fear of being shamed.  
This is for every woman who does not have the strength to come forward  
and tell her story. This is for every mother. Every daughter. Every sister  
who put everyone before her and stayed silent. For every woman who  
feared the shame and judgment that society might put her through for  
speaking about what happened to her.

I have overcome so much of this experience through much therapy and  
healing, through the love and support of so many. I am certainly on the  
other side. But what is currently sticking with me the most is the trauma  
that still lives inside of me, the reliving of the pain of abuse and the  
triggers that I have every time I hear his name or am reminded of this  
experience. I did not ask for what happened to me to happen to me. And I  
in no way am adopting a victim mentality. I have fully acknowledged my  
part in all of this. My investment in all of this. I am just telling the truth of  
what I went through and am not ashamed to admit my part in it. I should  
have known better, but I was at an age and stage in my life and career that  
I could not know any better. But he did know better.

Finally, if you are reading this, I don't want you to pity me. I want you to  
stand with me and with other women who may have experienced similar  
scenarios. And I want you to stand up for yourself if you're going through  
something similar. Know the power of your voice. And never be silenced. I  
allowed someone's lack of willingness to hear me to make me believe that  
I had no voice. I allowed someone's power abuse to make me feel  
powerless. I allowed the fear of being shamed for having feelings to stop  
me from opening up to anyone who could help me. And I've carried this  
weight for way too long. But not anymore. Not from today.

Being made aware of other women helped me no longer see my story as  
an isolated one which I truly believed I deserved to take the blame for, but  
part of a pattern of this kind of behaviour.

The number of times I've lingered in front of my screen, fearing sharing  
this, knowing that it is the truth, prompts me only to ask myself one  
question: What do I want to choose today? Courage or fear?

Today, I want to choose courage. My silence has only served the purpose  
of perpetuating my fears.

2018, I welcome you with nothing but courage and healing.

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## Post 33:



November 7, 2017 · 🌐

[#metoo](#) I've heard a lot of stories about sexual assault in the disability community, but still never thought it would happen to me, that was until 4 and a half years ago, when I was sick in the hospital with pneumonia. I had been there for a little over a month and was finally getting back to my old self, so the last few days I was in the hospital I was asked to train some of the nurse interns and I had done it other times and made good friends from the experience, so I agreed. The first few days went great but the day before I was able to leave the hospital I woke up to someone with their hand between my legs touching me, unfortunately I couldn't see their face because I sleep with something over my eyes which made the experience even more frightening and the fact that I can't move because of my illness. At first I thought I was dreaming but when I realized I wasn't dreaming I yelled "who's there?" I know it was a stupid thing to yell but at the time that was the only thing that I could think of, after I yelled the person quickly ran out the room and I was in shock for pretty much the rest of that day. I didn't tell anyone what happened until later that day when I broke down and told my mom, I felt stupid for not saying something sooner but I was afraid nobody would believe me. The next day my mom went and told the nurses what happened and asked if anyone seen anything on the camera that was in my room, I can't use a call bell so they would turn the camera on when my mom went for a smoke so they could hear me, but the intern I had didn't turn the camera on, and she told my mom that she did go into my room to make sure that I had the call bell, even though my mom specifically told her I can't use a call bell! but the intern insisted that my mom didn't tell her that, and the worst part was that all the nurses working were on the intern's side and made it out that I was lying which was devastating to me because I know what happened and other than my mom I felt nobody believed me! and a few days after it happened my mom had an appointment so she stopped in to see one of the nurses that we've known since I was a child and she wasn't there the day my mom almost punched the intern out, but she was there the day that happened to me and she told my mom that she saw all the interns outside my door with their phones and she thought it was odd but didn't think anything more than that. When my mom went to the police and told them what happened the police said that because I didn't see who was touching me there wasn't enough evidence to do anything. I couldn't go with my mom to the police station because we didn't have a van back then. I don't know if the intern thought I couldn't feel because I'm in a wheelchair, but just because someone is in a wheelchair doesn't mean they can't feel and it doesn't give someone the right to touch them sexually! but it seems people think that it's ok because we're disabled. The worst part now is knowing that she is probably a nurse and could do what she did to me to someone else [#metoo](#)

## Post 34:



October 16, 2017 · 🌐

## Me too

I've hesitated to join in on this facebook status because I've worked through my experience but the Harvey Weinstein case has me so angry and frustrated that I felt like I needed to. I shared some of this before on people's statuses when they were against the women's march or if I felt like they were dismissive of accusations against President Trump. For me, I was 21 and at the home of a well-known doctor and director of the emergency room in Watertown. I was there for work as I was employed as a teacher's assistant for a summer program for children. The doctor's children were in the program and we were having the awards ceremony and end of the program party at his home. While at his home, he made several sexually inappropriate comments directed at me and later in the day found himself with the opportunity to sexually assault me by touching me inappropriately. I left that day feeling confused and upset and not knowing what to do. After talking to my parents, I pressed charges. It was hard. Really hard. It went to a grand jury trial and then on further. In the end he had to seek treatment for his behavior and had to read a statement of apology to me in court. After the case was settled, I was contacted by the Department of Health and the Office of Professional Medical Conduct who were beginning an investigation against the doctor. Unfortunately I was not his only victim. After my case went public so many people came out of the wood work with similar experiences. They were nurses, patients, and others who he had preyed upon. They all happened before me. I hold no anger against any of them because I know how hard it was to come forward but I do wonder if any of them had, might I have been spared from this. If any of Harvey Weinstein's victims would have come forward in a very public way, would years' worth of him assaulting others might have been prevented? I don't know. I am though very thankful that other victims finally had the courage to come forward because after 6-7 years of investigation by the office of professional medical conduct, we all testified in front of the Professional Medical Conduct Administrative Review Board and because of that, they found he was unfit to practice medicine. As of 2005, his license was revoked and he is no longer able to practice medicine in New York.

<https://apps.health.ny.gov/.../factions/PhysicianDetailsActio...>

If you are reading this, male or female, and think that you are too young, not strong enough, not powerful enough to speak up against someone who has sexually harassed or assaulted you. I am here to tell you, you can do it. It is hard but you can do it. Help prevent someone else from experiencing what you have. I believe in you. #metoo

### Final Actions

opmc@health.ny.gov Home Page / From the Commissioner / Directory Services / Vital Records / Info for Consumers / Info for Providers / Info for Researchers / Public Health Forum / What's New / HELP! / Search our Web Site

APPS.HEALTH.NY.GOV

## Post 35:



October 16, 2017 at 8:47am · 🌐

**Me too.** My first restaurant job in New York. It was my manager, and I was fired because I spoke out. I kid you not, 4 years later I still avoid walking past that place and haven't since leaving. I wish I had done more about it.

**#metoo**

## Post 36:



November 10, 2017

The man next door...

In my case it was my next-door neighbor. When we would run into each other, he would lick his lips lasciviously or flick his tongue as if to imitate oral sex. This was his personal favorite. I avoided looking at this man, let alone running into him. That is, until the day he became uncharacteristically clumsy. He exited his apartment just as I did. Damn it. I was about to lock the door when he suddenly lurched toward me, as if falling. He "broke" his fall by grabbing my chest, a maneuver that seemed to last an eternity. Super slow motion. His hand lingered. He pushed me against the wall and I tried to kick him in the nuts but I missed. I pushed back, freeing myself to run back into my apartment which, luckily, I had not yet locked. I heard him run down the stairs.

I told no one. I agonized about telling my father. I was 15 years old. But, I knew my father would kill him and end up doing 20 -to-life. This would mean my mother, brother and I would be homeless. I had it all figured out. And so, I lived there in silence, guarding my secret and desperately avoiding the man next door until I moved out on my 25th birthday. Over the years, I have fantasized about returning there, knife in hand, on the slim chance I might "run" into him all these years later and experience my own loss of balance.

**#metoo**

Post 38:



October 29, 2017

I guess here we go... Here is my story, a story that affects my everyday life/me. It all started when I was 13-14 years of age. My grandma had started to develop Alzheimer's a disease that would soon take away all her memory of things that went on. She would have memory of only the past. Me being me wanted to help, I decided that I would be the one who would give my grandma all the love and attention she needed when nobody else could/while they had to work and provide for their own household family. I started staying weeks at a time, I loved it. I loved staying with my grandma until I met a man, a man who completely changed me and my way of life. This man was an alcoholic, 40 years of age, a generally scary looking man. I thought to myself, hmm... I don't know how to feel about him he looks like he's up to know good, and that he was. He started coming around everyday, popping in for a visit. Soon those days turned into nights, this man started staying over night in the back room of my grandmas house. He'd made himself welcome in her home and I didn't know what I could do about it. I felt there was nothing I could do, I tried to brush it off and tell myself it was nothing/it was ok. What a mistake. This man had made his way into my room and raped me. He did this multiple times and proceeded to tell me if I told he would kill himself. I couldn't be the reason someone killed then selves I thought. I let this go on and said nothing. I had started to develop depression, I was so sad I couldn't take it anymore. I had to tell someone, someone I could trust/someone who wouldn't tell. I told someone very close to me that I needed to talk and made him promise not to tell if I told him what was going on, he agreed. Not long after I had told him the home phone started ringing. I rushed and grabbed it before anyone else could. It was my dad, he wanted to know what was going on. All I could do was bawl, I couldn't speak. He said Kylie is there something going on and the only word that I managed to get out was yes. My chest was tight, this man was standing in the kitchen door way staring at me and wanted to know what was going on. He was gonna rape me again that night and he said I was gonna like it. A lot of stuff happened that night, stuff I'm not gonna go into detail about because I don't really wanna talk about it. But can I just say people who say it'll get better it'll be fine, how?!! I am 16 and still don't know how to deal with it. I have anxiety,depression, And very bad paranoia at night. I get so scared sometimes that I start puking and shaking and wish I could just end it all by taking my own life. It's not easy, and I just want to let anyone who thinks their going through this alone know their not. #Metoo

## Post 39:



October 17, 2017 · 🌐

**#MeToo.** I've never talked about this publicly, but when I was 27 and 6 months pregnant, a slimy chiropractor near the Sam's Club off 695 in Baltimore molested me. I was too stunned to scream but I got out of there and never went back. We moved not long after that but I have always regretted not reporting him because I found out later that this was his typical approach, and I was angry that the woman who referred me knew it. I never told my husband but after Donald Trump's disgusting display of sexist behavior and bragging about similar behavior, I finally shared my experience. Why didn't I tell him? I don't know - embarrassment? Fear of being judged? Laughed at? Not being believed? I don't know.

But my lingering question is: If I'm almost 6 feet tall, muscular, athletic and anything but timid, how in the world does a small, meek person deal with something like this?

I was temporarily immobilized (as described in this article about what happens during sexual assault [https://www.scientificamerican.com/.../sexual-assault-may-tr...](https://www.scientificamerican.com/.../sexual-assault-may-tr.../)) and that's partly why I decided to get a black belt in Hapkido at 40 and I'm going after another one in Tzee Wai Kuen now. I will never be unable or unwilling to react with immediate strikes and my own version of immobilizing someone else with power and confidence if I'm attacked again, and if I see it happening to someone else, watch out. I'm ready. We are our sisters' keepers. **#Neveragain**



### Sexual Assault May Trigger Involuntary Paralysis

"Tonic immobility" hinders the ability to fight and is linked to high rates of depression and PTSD

SCIENTIFICAMERICAN.COM

Post 40:



October 16, 2017 · 🌐

[#metoo](#)

When I was 12 years old my drunk step father sexually molested me.

Then when I was 22 I passed out at a party and woke up with some guy on top of me.

Then there were all the times I was felt I had to say yes when I was screaming no inside.

Post 41:



October 16, 2017 · 🌐

[#metoo](#) was molested as in a child, sexually harassed and assaulted as I grew up, looked down by men on gender taboos and stigmas, objectified for having habits as in men; #metoo faced violence in relationship, still get eye-raped almost every single day I go out in the city; #metoo faced other women criticising me for having/practising equal rights as in men.

If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote "Me too" as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem. #metoo

Please copy/paste if appropriate.



## Post 42:



October 19, 2017

#metoo

My name is Amanda and im 21. I work two jobs. One is during the day at a gas station and one is at night at a grocery store. Customers can be so disgusting. Old men telling me they'd like to take me home or telling me I'd make a good house wife. Just little slips or disturbing things to make your skin crawl.

Working the night shift I had three guys come in at surround me at work. The leader, I guess, started talking to me like "hey baby" and "I had a wet dream about you last night. Wanna hear it?" I was alone. No one to help me and I was scared. I said no and found a break away point were I could get to the back. Everytime i see a group of men at work I try to get somewhere else. Somewhere were they can't get me. The fear is real and it's not outside on the street or at a bar. It's at work. At a grocery store. So everyone saying that the place you are at causes fear has no grounds.

One of the janitors at my night shift job was very disgusting to. He's make comments about sex jokes or anything innapropriate. I didn't say anything for awhile. Then he started harassing the other young girls at my work too. He's take pictures of them. To one of the girls he even said that she'd look better if she was naked. Like what do you even say to that? Me and some of the girls he was harassing banned together and told our story to many managers. One of the managers went back and told the guy that he couldn't say those things and then told him who we were. We felt like we had a target on our back. Scared about being alone at night. The janitors remakes only got worse. He told another male coworker that he bet I taste like strawberries. I assume he thought it was funny do to my strawberry blind hair. The male coworker was disgusted. He told me and helped file another complaint. We finally got a manager who would listen and report the events officially to HR. The janitor was fired. It took two years for someone to listen.

Let's talk about just going out to get food at taco bell. My friend dropped some taco on her leg and it was summer so she was in shorts, only about 16 at the time. A man sitting a table away leaned over and said "why don't you have your boyfriend lick that up" There were no guys there. She didn't even have a boyfriend at that time. She felt uncomfortable and left shortly after.

How about at my gas station job guys will come in asking to take me home with them. How do you respond? No thank you. And then they get mad like why wouldn't you. This isn't something happening every now and then. It's almost every day. I'm lucky enough that I have some coworkers who look out for me but when I'm alone I really feel it.

Thank you for listening to my story.

## Post 44:



October 16, 2017

#metoo

I was groped by a co-worker when I was 23 years old. I was working at a salad bar. He was always hitting on me and I told him I was not interested but he never took no for an answer. One day I went to fetch salad dressing to re-stock from the walk-in fridge it was in a mall and the area was very secluded you had to walk through a long hall and then get to the fridge. When I got there he was inside I was already very uncomfortable. His skeezy smile made me cringe and I tried to ignore him and just get what I needed and leave as soon as possible. But then he started the flirting again and I ignored him and then he got angry and grabbed my you know what. And I screamed and punched him. I then managed to break loose and there was a cart in between us with big bottles of salad dressing and I kicked it over towards him and they went flying on him. Then I ran away. I told my boss as soon as I got back to the salad bar, I told him I was going to report him to mall security. The boss got angry at ME saying he didn't want "trouble" And its bad for business and they were friends so he was obviously protecting him. He told me to "slap him in the face next time". I regret not going to mall security I just quit my job shortly after.

This is only one of my stories.

My heart goes out to all victims ❤️

## Post 45:



October 16, 2017 · Seattle, WA · 🌐

#MeToo.

I've been fairly public about this; sharing to reiterate that I'm always available to other survivors to offer any support I can ❤️

Six years ago, I was raped. By someone I knew.

Reported it.

Police escort to the ER.

Met with the prosecutor (a woman; an awesome woman) who gave me the honest truth: you can take this to court and I'll do my very best, but the fact is they'll drag your name through the mud (especially because of the "revealing" cosplay), you'll go through hell, and then at the end of all that, there's a greater than 50% chance you'll watch him walk.

Thanked her and decided not to move forward with the court, but to move forward with my life.

Received support, moved forward, then gave an empowering and cathartic TEDxSeattle talk one year later.

Two years later, he was convicted of raping a 13 year old girl, and is currently serving jail time.

#BittersweetJustice

## Post 46:



October 16, 2017 · 🌐

## #MeToo

Because I was never told that it was okay to say no, but instead I was told, "boys will be boys." Me too.

Because I was taking a nap in public, there was no one around, and I was wearing a skirt that day. So it looked like an excellent opportunity to take advantage of me. Me too.

Because I saw you again a couple of weeks later. There, you looked at me up and down, then you gave me a smirk. You smirked at me to insinuate that you got away with what you did. All because the magistrate did not like the way I worded the deposition, even when there was video evidence. So they could not arrest you. Me too.

Because I was never taught how to deal with sexual situations, but instead I was told, "If you have sexual relations outside of wedlock, God will not bless you." Me too.

Because I am at a party with my girlfriends, so that supposedly means I want to be inappropriately groped and grabbed. Me too.

I am not the one to share personal experiences on Facebook, but I felt compelled to contribute to the #MeToo voices. For those of you who have also experienced this, you are important. Your story is powerful and your voice matters. But most importantly, you are not alone.

Post 49:



October 20, 2017 · 🌐

I have been struggling with how to talk about some of my own experiences and how to frame this song as a call to community action. This could be triggering for some, so please be aware that this is raw and unfiltered. #metoo

Update: I spoke with my folks about this song and what it meant for me to share it. They were so supportive, but said that they couldn't hear all the words. So, I read it to them and they impressed upon me how important the words of this song were, I agreed.

"Tell Him So For Me"

Won't you take my hand  
I'll take you to a place  
So you will understand  
why it's so hard to explain  
He forced me to my knees  
His hands across my face  
I could barely breathe  
So I closed my eyes and prayed, I prayed  
He can't come around no more  
He ain't welcome here  
If you see him, will you tell him so  
Please tell so for me  
It's been so many years  
Since the wounds within me screamed  
Yet, I cannot un-see  
The broken parts of me

Cause when he held me down  
The person that I was  
Lost a little piece  
That never can be found, be found  
He can't come around no more  
He ain't welcome here  
If you see him, will you tell him so  
Please tell so for me  
And I don't want to hear that I am strong or brave  
And I don't want you to feel sorry for me  
No, I don't need a distraction from the pain  
All I want is for this to stop happening...  
If you think you know him  
Or someone just the same  
Will you write their name for me  
On the walls for all to see  
If you are him  
You know what you've done  
And this song is about you  
Now wear it like a sign, like I wear mine  
You can't come around no more  
No, you ain't welcome here  
If I see you, I will tell you so  
I will tell you so for me



## Post 50:



November 4, 2017

In 1976 I attended a party conference in Brighton, as an enthusiastic budding politician. Unaware of my autism, and inability to read people, I accepted this man's invitation to come to his hotel room to view some political papers he said I would find interesting. He said he was off to the bathroom to wash after handing me some papers. I settled in to read them, as I realised there was nothing of interest in the papers, I was confronted with a naked Peter Morrison MP, who threw me onto the bed knees to the floor, pulling off my clothing trying to rape me.

I wriggled free and clutching my trousers ran for the room door, only to find it locked. I had to perform a sex act on him to gain my freedom. When a shaken me tried to report it to other Conservatives. I was laughed at. Told I should be honoured to be another of Morissey's boys.

It affected my whole life in ways I cannot describe here. Only after 2 years of counselling post dx for autism did I realise why I had been sexually assaulted by different men all my life. Never understood I wear a face of vulnerability, linked to attachment disorder and other mental illnesses including compartmentalising my mind to block out the un understood hurts.

The worst news was his appointment as PPS to Margaret Thatcher. The best news was his death from a heart attack aged 51. God truly does deal with evil.



## Post 51:



October 26, 2017

Thank you all for the inspiration to write. I have been writing in Norwegian media about this campaign and the Norwegian outrageously shitty politics on rape, but this is going to be brief. This is "just" my #metoo.

- Peace an love

It was not particularly dramatic nor violent. I do not have bruises. But I went blind. And I could not move. I was at a party. I was on my way home, waiting for a taxi. Moments earlier I sat on a chair and really just felt a little buzz. But the next moment I was completely blind and laying on the floor. The first thought was just, wow, sometimes a drink goes straight to ones head. Then he picked me up. Carried me quite gently into another room. Layed down the paralyzed body on a sofa and undressed it. Completely quiet. Without any drama. Without any resistance. No bruises. No police or medical examination. Just quiet. I went home. Showerd. Slept. And stayed quiet.

## Post 52:



November 14, 2017

#metoo

15 year Army Veteran. After over 30 years of burying so deep I never ever discussed with anyone, I finally started dealing with my Military Sexual Assault. Bringing it out to the open has caused PTSD, Acute Depressive disorder, and more.

I am a rape survivor. I refuse to be it's victim any longer.

I will not let it own me anymore. I'm taking my life back at 56.

It held me captive for decades without even knowing it.

It will not make decisions for me anymore.

## Post 53:



October 17, 2017 · 🌐

Obviously [#metoo](#). I'm fortunate never to have been violently assaulted, but everyday harassment? Of course. I lost count of the number of men TODAY ALONE who tried to get my attention, yelled suggestive comments at me, and, in one case, followed me down the street calling after me for half a block. I'd guess it was in the range of 6-8? I forget, it's just what happens when going outside, no matter how I'm dressed. There's also the men who have followed me for multiple blocks, or who have said such foul things while staring me up and down that I've wanted to throw up or burst into strange, shame-filled tears. The classmate in college who would drunkenly bound into my room at night and crawl into my bed next to me while I was asleep and start to feel me up. The dudes in school who would constantly make jokes about the size of my lips, and how they're built to give great blow jobs. The guy who groped me on a crowded express train while I said nothing in horrified shock. The guys who have taken my phone out of my hands to call their phone so they'd have my number. The acquaintance who stalked and harassed me online for months that I didn't want to block because it seemed "too dramatic" or "rude" who I now have blocked TWICE on fb, as he's the kind of guy who needs multiple accounts in order to get at women who block him the first time. The husband of a director I was working with on one of my very first jobs who wouldn't stop making comments about my young body when his wife wasn't in the room. The (multiple) gay men who have grabbed my breasts or my ass (usually IN REHEARSAL ROOMS), as though that somehow wasn't a tremendous violation of my body and space.

So. You'll excuse me if I'm constantly enraged after putting up with decades of this nonsense.

## Post 55:



October 15, 2017 · 🌐

me too.

my first time. my second time. drugged and shamed by my friends who were also friends of my aggressor. many days and incidents since. violence inside of a 8 year long term relationship. guys it's a real issue/problem. [#metoo](#)



## Post 56:



October 17, 2017 · 🌐

At this ungodly hour of the night, I've decided to add the following in solidarity with every single individual who has had the courage to open the floodgates, and in honor of [#TaranaBurke](#) who coined [#metoo](#): For all the unwanted "free" drinks, intrusive stares, disgusting words, gropes and grinds, for that hand that somehow finds itself "down south," for when I'm told I should "smile sweetheart," for when I deserve to be made eye-contact with but am somehow deprived the professional presence, for when my mom had to feel worried and responsible if she didn't warn me "not to wear that when you go there," (for not being able to wear "that" when I go "there"), for when I may be feeling depressed but it doesn't matter because I'm on my period, for when he wished my burrito was his dick, for when I am interrupted to be proven that what I have to say may not be as important, for being followed home at 13, 17, 22, for having to carry pepper spray, for being told I should "unbutton a few more of those" if I want the part, for being told my success is doomed for not being "conventionally beautiful," for being pitted against fellow women because he doesn't like being confrontational, for all that woke-ass misogyny that masks sexual assault with the guise of "heated passion," for when "my mouth says no but my eyes say yes," for the time when pulling my pants up when he pulled them down seven times was "come on, fun and sexy," for these three years of denying the latter as an "assault" so as not to cause "problems" for anyone, for being told not to exaggerate, for when "exotic" equals "good in bed," for saying sorry too god-fucking-damn much, (for being told I should at a young age), for when you're the bait and the kill, and for those who recycle the word "feminist" like chewing gum just to get some o' that "nasty-woman" ass ... but okay, what's new? Perhaps most importantly, what's next? And for those who are feeling that urge to counter it all, please, try to hold that thought. Because no, this is not self-victimization. No, this is not a celebration of victimhood. No, this is not vengeance. Yes, this is honesty. Yes, this is relieving, and yes, sure, WE'VE HAD ENOUGH. And no, I'm definitely not sorry. [#bende](#) [#ustoo](#) [#wetoo](#) [#ibelieveyou](#)

Post 57:



October 17, 2017 · 🌐

CW: Detailed description of my sexual assault.

Me too.

Over the past year or so, I've battled with myself over whether or not I should write an essay about my experience with sexual assault. It's something I have kept bottled up for such a long time, mostly because I've been scared, deathly afraid, that this intimate and horrifying moment in my life would be met with negative attention or worse, apathy.

The reason women take so long to publicly come forward after an event like this is that opening up this incredibly vulnerable moment in your life is not worth it if you will not receive support and sympathy. Wounds like these stay fresh for a very long time, and I have debated myself many times on whether opening up my story to public scrutiny will simply undo the healing I've managed so far.

But I am stronger now, and I know that even if my story reaches one woman and lets them know that they are not alone, or reaches one man and shows him the reality of rape culture, that my trauma can be a force of good for someone. So without further ado, here is my story:

It was senior year in high school. I had never been that popular, but at this point I had a solid group of friends and felt generally happy. I started hanging out with some kids from Brighton, one of which happened to be an ex from over two years prior of a member of my friend group. She got upset, and I was abruptly excommunicated from all of my friends.

As time passed, I began to date the boy in Brighton, all while trying to find other friends to replace the ones who had abandoned me so readily. A popular bad boy from school, Nick, invited me over to hang out one afternoon and I jumped at the chance since he had always seemed cool and I wanted to find a new friend group so desperately. I knew my dad had heard of Nick since he and his friends had a reputation of druggies,

so I told him I was going to hang out with some preppy kids from school, and he dropped my off at Nicks house after school.

I was very naive at this point in my life. I had never even smoked weed. But here I was, knocking on the door of a local druggie looking for friendship. He seemed cool enough at first, we watched some TV and talked about random stuff. I had a headache, and he grabbed me a pill and said "here this will help." I asked him what it was, and he wouldn't tell me. I was an idiot to take it, but I wanted to seem cool and I figured it was just extra strength Advil or something and he was just messing around.

I started to feel a bit dizzy. What was going on? Nick came over to me and offered me a listerine strip. I was perplexed but didn't have enough mental coherency to say no. He told me to put it under my tongue, and it tasted bad. I was starting to feel very confused. Why was the listerine strip orange? Why did it taste so bitter?

The answer was: Nick had given me a Klonopin and a suboxone strip. Two extremely powerful drugs, one of which is synthetic heroin for recovering addicts. As I started to slip in and out of consciousness, Nick began kissing me. I still remember the taste of cigarettes. I clearly and with as much energy as I could muster said "no, stop, I have a boyfriend," but although my mouth was working, my body wasn't. I couldn't fight back. I remember shaking and crying and for some odd reason became fixated and embarrassed about the fact that I hadn't shaved. I continued to say no and feebly try and push him off until I passed out.

When I woke up, I was naked except for my underwear. There were several people standing around the bed. I didn't have time to take in the scene before promptly dashing to the bathroom and vomiting. As I crawled back to the bed, I saw two of Nick's friends, John and Taylor, who had also gone to school with me, talking to a shirtless Nick who was in his boxers.

I collapsed on the bed, wrapped my nakedness up in a comforter, tried to process what was happening. Nick was saying, "I don't care what you do with her, just take her somewhere else. My dad's coming home soon and I'll be in deep shit if she's still here." My mind was starting to race, I was panicking. I was scared.

Then, a blessed thing happened that in all likelihood saved my life. My phone started going off, and kept on going off over and over. I managed to crawl over to it, and saw my dad's name on the screen. He told me he had felt weird after dropping me off, and that he had googled the address and found out Nick lived there. He was heading over there now and I was in so much trouble.

I was more grateful than I had ever been in my life. I struggled to get dressed, all the while Nick's friends leered at me and even offered to help me get dressed. I had enough clarity to tell them to back off. I stumbled down the stairs and out to my dad's car, thank god he'd arrived.

When I got in the car, my dad immediately noticed something off. I had huge, I mean golf ball sized, hickeys up and down my neck and chest. I was slurring my speech and kept falling asleep. He immediately drove back to Nick's house to ask what had happened and called an ambulance. He pulled into Nick's driveway and his dad, a doctor, answered the door.

My dad told him what condition I was in and informed him that he had called an ambulance, and the man's first response was: "can you please move your car off the driveway? We're getting it redone." My father remained parked solidly in the driveway until the ambulance arrived. I vaguely recall Nick coming out to the car and apologizing. Of course my dad didn't know how far his abuse had gone, otherwise Nick probably would've gotten mowed down right in his driveway.

The ambulance took me to the hospital where I remained for several days. The combination and strength of the drugs Nick had given me had compromised my heart, and although I don't remember it, I wavered close to the boundary between life and death for some time.

During the first 24 hours in the hospital, where I was recovering not only from my first time ever having drugs like that in my system but also from an overdose, is when the police came. I had consented to a rape kit, which involved pictures of my various hickies and bruises, of my genitals, and an in depth examination similar to a gynecologist visit. They said they'd get the results back soon.

Then the police came, as they do when rape kits are done, to interview me. I don't even remember the interview. I don't even know what I said. I was so hopped up on the drugs Nick gave me and the drugs the hospital gave me that I'm sure much of what I said was incoherent gibberish. However, as I later came to find out, that interview was counted as evidence and what I said then, not when I was sober and could actually recollect the events, was the only statement they would take.

I eventually came back to my senses, covered in bruises from the assault and from the IVs, and called my old best friend, the girl I had been close like sisters with for years before I had been kicked out of our friend group. I told her what happened, I was completely distraught. I called my boyfriend as well, and told him what happened. He was sympathetic enough and said we'd talk about it when I was out of the hospital.

When I finally did get out of the hospital, I didn't know what to do with myself. I had to go back to school where I had no friends, carrying the weight of this trauma on my shoulders. The morning before my first day back I picked out a nice outfit, a skirt, a long sleeved shirt to cover my IV bruises, a scarf to cover the bruises on my neck and chest. I also threw on a pair of heels, because I wanted to feel pretty and confident.

As soon as I arrived at school, the formspring messages started pouring in. For those of you who don't know or remember formspring, it was a platform to ask anonymous questions online, similar to Sarahah, except everyone else could see the questions and answers as well on a feed. People were messaging me things like "ur lying about being raped who would dress like a slut after something like that?" I knew then that my best friend of years had told someone what happened to me. She took away

my anonymity and forced me to relive my trauma on my first day back to school.

My boyfriend broke up with me the next time I saw him. He didn't believe I had been assaulted, he thought I had cheated on him.

The rest of my senior year continued like that. I eventually made new friends, but John and Taylor, Nick's friends who had been there at the time of the assault, were part of the group too which made me uncomfortable. I repeatedly asked John why he didn't do something. I asked both of them if they would testify if I brought the case to trial. Both refused.

How naive I was to think the case would ever go to trial. 7 months later and my rape kit came back. Negative. The nurse told me all that means is that he could have used a condom. I have never been able to remember what happened that afternoon in his room, and I don't know whether to be angry or thankful.

After my rape kit results came back I met with an RPD detective to talk about pressing charges. My dad came with me. I told the detective clearly and succinctly that I wanted to press sexual assault charges. Even with a negative rape kit, there were still two witnesses that could be subpoenaed, there was photographic evidence of hickies, my hospital records would show that I had been unable to consent due to the large amount of drugs Nick had given me.

The detective said I would never win. He said that Nick told detectives I had consented to both taking the drugs and the sexual activities. Despite my insistence to the contrary on both counts (I hadn't willingly taken suboxone knowing it was a drug, and I very clearly articulated my lack of consent before passing out) it was my word against his, and his wealthy and connected father had pulled some strings.

I insisted I wanted to take the case to court, and the detective said he would get back to me. He never did.

As the years passed, I heard stories that similar things had been done by him to other women. He was arrested for other things eventually. But then, once I thought the wounds of trauma had healed, he began popping up. First at the grocery store, then at the gym. Then, I found out he went to MCC. The first time I saw him there it was like a lightning bolt of ice raced through my body. I started hyperventilating. The worst part is, I doubt he even remembers what he did to me.

I wish this story had a happier ending. I tried to do the right thing, I thought I had enough evidence on my side. But until this day, I have never felt comfortable publicly acknowledging this story. Nick Colakovski sexually assaulted me, and I let my shame keep me silent.

I will be silent no more.

Post 58:



October 17, 2017 · 🌐

My junior year. I was 16. He had proposed. It was homecoming. He'd been begging and begging, and used the "it's a special occasion and you love me" routine. I pretended like I was okay for days. When I told him what he had done to me he got mad at me.

I'd graduated. We'd been together for two years. He was unstable. He'd cry and manipulate me, using "I haven't seen you in a week, I just miss you!" then not letting me say no.

I am not ashamed. Do you feel overwhelmed by all of women and men coming forward? you should be.

[#MeToo](#)