

How do you write a victim impact statement? How do you put into words the impact that a rape had on your life? It's hard for me to label myself as a *victim*. It's not even easy to admit the *impact* this had on me, much less make a statement about it. How can one be expected to do this?

I want to clarify that I am not going into detail and to explain how the defendant sexually assaulted me. I've already come forward and given my statement to the police. The Minneapolis papers already told my story and plastered my rape all over their headlines. Most of campus read the details in the paper, in an article I couldn't even get through. It had happened *to me*, I lived through it and I still couldn't read about my own rape when it was put into words. But I'm done explaining what he did to me that night. I want to tell my story of what happened after that night. Because that rape didn't stop on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014. It wasn't over after one night. It still isn't over and that's why I'm in front of all of you today, almost two years later.

I'm reading a "victim impact letter" right now but Daniel Drill-Mellum did not "impact" my life; he completely uprooted and altered it. In one night I felt like my life wasn't mine anymore. I was going through the motions but it wasn't really me doing it. My mind was elsewhere; my mind was trying to process what happened to my body.

My body went to the hospital the morning after he raped me. My roommate told me I should go and so we walked across campus to Boyton. When I walked into Boyton and they asked what was wrong I didn't know what to say, I didn't know how to say the words "I was raped." Eventually Boyton staff put me in a wheelchair and told me they needed to bring me over to Fairview Hospital. I remember begging them to let me walk. I was fine, I could still walk, I wasn't broken, my legs still worked. I clung onto walking as this sense of normalcy. If I didn't have to sit in a wheelchair then maybe something wasn't really wrong with me. I spent the day in the hospital talking to nurses and doctors, being pressured for insurance information. I refused to let them do a rape kit or any other test they offered me because I was scared I would have to pay for it. My biggest fear was the money. Isn't that crazy? I was worried about how I was going to pay for my emergency room bill. I couldn't pay for rape kit or a blood test to calculate what my blood alcohol level was the night before. I couldn't give them my parents' insurance because then my parents would know that I was in the hospital. I didn't want my parents to worry that I was in the hospital. The morning after I was raped I was worried about the money. It sounds ridiculous when I say it now, but it felt like a valid reason back then. At that point it still felt surreal, it didn't feel like my life. I was at the hospital because that's what you do when you get raped. They couldn't do extra tests because I couldn't pay for it. My mind was working in very black and white ways. Everything seemed clear then, my decisions were easy. That's the last time any thing would seem easy in this process.

After being at the hospital all day I walked home and tried to act like everything was normal. Then came Monday when I had to walk across campus to my first class of the day. By the time I got to class I was shaking. I walked in pale white, unsteady on my feet and barely able to speak. My classmates were looking at me, they could tell something was wrong. I sat down next to my roommate and she asked what was wrong. I explained that every blonde haired kid I passed on the way to class I thought was "him." I saw the defendant in everyone I passed and my paranoia reached an all time high. That feeling didn't stop. I walked home from that class that day with my head down; I stared at the ground the whole way home. From that point on I felt threatened when I walked to class. I was terrified of seeing him.

I had no idea who he even was. I didn't know his name. I had never met him before. I found out who he was through a Facebook picture. My roommate showed me his profile on Facebook and the second I saw his picture I knew he was the person guilty of sexually assaulting me. It was his smile. He smiled at me as I left his fraternity house that night. He smiled, it was a sickening. He had the audacity to smile at me after what he had just done to me.

Still even after I knew who he was I tried to carry on living my life normally. He was still just a name to me, I didn't *know* him. Then the anxiety attacks and flashbacks started. It usually happened when I was in a crowded room with lots of people. I would start feeling anxious and suffocated. Thinking it would help, I would leave for the bathroom to remove myself from the crowd. The bathroom made it worse. Suddenly I *really* couldn't breath, the bathroom walls would start closing in around me and I felt like I had no escape and then all suddenly I was back at the fraternity house and he was on top of me again. I would carry on like this hyperventilating with tears streaming down my face. Sometimes I passed out because I wasn't breathing steadily enough. I would come to terrified and confused. The first time it happened, my boyfriend almost called an ambulance, he couldn't get me to calm down and I wouldn't let him touch me. I kept passing out because I wasn't breathing normally. When I finally realized where I was, he was in tears and a friend of his was sitting in front of me looking scared and holding a glass of water.

The flashbacks happened countless times after. They weren't any less frightening for other friends who tried calming me down. They would try to hold me or give me their hand to let me know they were there and I would cringe and pull away. All I could say was "Don't touch me, don't touch me, don't touch me." Sometimes I heard my friends trying to talk to me and would latch on to their voices. They would talk to me about my family and tell me where I was, they would ask me to open my eyes and look around. They tried anything to ground me to the place where I was and to get me out of the place inside my head.

The anxiety meds I was prescribed didn't help much and it wasn't until summer after my freshman year when I finally opened up about the assault and told anyone the details of it. My mom forced me into therapy. My anxiety and flashbacks had gotten so bad and she decided it wasn't my choice anymore. After countless therapy sessions I was going back to school in the fall more confident about my control over my anxiety. My flashbacks had almost completely stopped and I really felt like I had some control over my life again.

October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015 he took that control away from me again. Up until this point I never considered coming forward. I heard about Abby's story. It happened one week after mine. I silently supported and believed her and hoped she would fight this battle for me. If Abby could go to court and win then he would be in jail and I would never have to deal with this again. I followed her case; the aurora center sent me updates. It felt like some stroke of luck that the same thing happened to both of us but she carried the weight of it publicly. But then the case fell through. Abby did everything she was supposed to do and still he wasn't in jail. She called 911 immediately after it happened, she went to the hospital and reported it to the police, she got a rape kit, but still he wasn't in jail. I cannot imagine being in her place and watching everything fall apart in front of her. From my perspective it was devastating. If Abby couldn't get *her* case to hold, my case had no chance. Then I got news that the University launched their own investigation and the defendant was suspended from the University of Minnesota for 10 years and banned from campus grounds. At that point I felt like maybe it was over, I would never have to worry about seeing him again. I could walk freely on campus and continue with my college career normally.

Then it was Halloween 2015. Halloween is a holiday, our campus was filled with students dressed in costumes and celebrating. Campus was celebrating because that's what you do on a holiday. I was trying my best to be enthusiastic and join the festivities when I got a call from a friend who had seen Dan at his fraternity senior house a block off campus. This wasn't just a normal friend; this was a friend who was ALSO sexually assaulted by Dan. We bonded over the fact that the same man sexually assaulted us. I was furious when she called me, of all days, he chose Halloween to show up. The exact year to the day that my assault had happened and Dan was on campus? How dare he? I felt so vulnerable and exposed. He wasn't technically on campus either, he had found a loophole to the University rule. All the fraternities, apartment buildings, sorority and fraternity houses are off of campus. I now felt threatened in my own home. I found my friend and we went home and cried to each other. I made two phone calls that day, one to campus security and one to the detective who was working on the case at the time.

Soon after both my friend and I walked into the University Police Station and gave our statements. I want to be clear that this woman is not either of the two us here today. Lacking evidence the lawyers decided against charging her case and pursued

my case and Abby's instead. But she is not forgotten, nor are the other girls that the defendant sexually assaulted.

Almost 2 years after he sexually assaulted me and almost one year after I came forward. This is finally ending and he is going to prison.

There are two of us brave enough to stand in front of him today and face him. Two of us, but there are so many more girls that he violated and assaulted. A detective I worked with on this case described him as worst predatory rapist he has ever encountered in the duration of his position. His actions are calculated and planned and it saddens me to think of the other women he has hurt. They, too reluctant to come forward in this system that gives rights to defendants and allows money to buy a criminal out of custody. The date of this trial was changed so his parents could support him. Dan, the rapist, got to change the date of this trial so he could be with his parents. Parents who sent him out of the country so he could attempt to escape this, parents who tried to buy him out of his crimes, parents of daughters allowing him to rape other people's daughters.

I am going to watch him walk out of this courtroom in handcuffs today and count it as a victory for all the daughters at the University of the Minnesota. A victory for women and daughters everywhere. I am proud that I had a part in putting him behind bars.

I will *never* be defined by him and what he did to me but he will forever be defined by me and the other girls he raped. That will stay with him forever. I am not a just victim of a rape. My identity consists of so much more. But Daniel Drill-Mellum will only ever be a rapist. That is where the description of him stops. He put me through two of the hardest years of my life. This process is exhausting, but unlike him I can say that I came out the other end of this a stronger and better person. I am in control now, I write my own story and define my own life. I am capable, I am confident and I define myself.