

Me Too, Jane Doe, and the Public Domain of Bodies

An essay by H.S. Wolfe

A note before we begin: This piece discusses rape, alcohol abuse, self harm and eating disorders in detail.

Every time a news story breaks, where one or many humans commit heinous acts against another, thousands and thousands of people come forward with stories of their own. Upon hearing what is most often a case of men brutally raping women, the internet takes on this strange transformation. People stand with victims, people say they would have acted differently, and give their condolences to their friends. People act shocked, as if this isn't something constantly occurring lifetimes over. And people who have experienced the same cruelty ban together because we know the world will not change overnight. We know there will be another story, another instance of the vicious stripping of autonomy, another person added to our ranks.

I have never told my story in full, it's long and difficult to hear. I keep it to myself, often, for the comfort of others. Not because it's hard for me to tell, but because it is hard to watch people flinch away when I tell. I keep it to myself because it does not erase what happened when people look at me with pity in their eyes, with sickness as they imagine, and pray they are never in that position. I think though, that we all need to get real close and intimate with being uncomfortable. We cannot surround ourselves in protective bubbles as we cry, and wish the world was better. We have to hear the uncomfortable truths, and we have to sit and listen to what has happened so we can understand. This is going to be long, this is going to be hard to read, and this is probably going to make you feel sick. I don't apologize for that. I don't apologize because I lived through it, and you only have to read about it. You can take breaks, you can process, you can center yourself.

I couldn't.

The first time I was raped, or sexually assaulted, and I say or because I have no memory of it, I must have been very young. What happened to me is not something I've yet been able to unlock in the depths of my memories. I've only been following clues along the way. By the time I was in kindergarten, I had started to display alarming signs of sexual abuse. I was aware of parts of my body in ways a child should never be. I didn't know it was bad, or that it wasn't supposed to happen to me, or that I wasn't supposed to explore this aspect of being human. I had an almost compulsive interest in figuring out the full scope of myself. I made my toys, dolls, stuffed animals, fuck each other. It's all I wanted to do, was act out sex with toys. I can't say more than that because a large part of my childhood is just a black hole blown out through my memory with a C-PTSD shot gun, scattering buck shot so what remains is just bits and scraps. Scraps filled with me crying in bed as a small child asking God if he was real why would he let this happen.

To my knowledge, no one noticed. And if they did, no one said anything. Often times when children display signs of abuse, it is so shameful and alarming that the trusted adults break their necks looking away from it. As an adult I phoned my mother and asked about it. It being the unknown incident I finally feel ready to uncover. I asked if she noticed me acting like that, if she knew if I had been left alone with anyone. Of course I got the same answer anyone gives, *"No! I would never leave you alone with an unsafe person. I don't even know anyone who would do that."*

I think this is the first point in where society fails us. Fails me, as a victim. Fails my family, fails their friend groups. The instinct is to *protect*. Not me, but the potential wolf among sheep. The reaction alone gave me all I need to know, and that is, an unwillingness to believe someone you know could be capable of this. A complete refusal to even examine this. Statistically it almost always is someone known to the victim in rape cases. A confidence in safety is built allowing predators access. It's built high enough to grab a victim and drag them behind it, shattering all trust. It happened to me, and I know it has happened to others that when you do speak up, you are not comforted, you are not assured that the perpetrator will be sniffed out and excised from the net of support, family, and friends. If you are lucky you are met with shock and suspicion. If you are less lucky you are blamed and shamed for daring to suggest such a thing.

I suppose since my mother knows not a single person that she left me with, that would do harm to my small, forming body, that I made it up. Or perhaps it was a ghost.

For no reason at all I'm going to add that I was a child of a touring musician, and a band wife. I had a childhood full of drunk adults partying all around me. So many of my memories are not of fun things I got to do with my family, but of alcoholics peeing in the yard and leaving broken glass on the floor. We had touring bands stop and stay at our house. The group of band children would be lugged around from place to place as adults drank themselves silly. Of course, this is probably not important to take into consideration when asking if I could have been harmed as a child. It's just something I happened to remember.

The second time I was assaulted, was by girls. Plural, and other children. I am so lucky, because it was ingrained in me over and over that my body exists to serve others, so the ways I have been taken advantage of are diverse! It allows me to speak on many different ways in which assault may present itself, and I can speak from a place of knowledge and experience.

When this happens it's called CoCSA which stands for child on child sexual abuse. I was in a girl scout troupe. I initially joined a large one as part of after school programs, but eventually a small number of us split from the large troupe and formed our own very small troupe. This was made up of *I think* five of us in total. We branched off from the school troupe and made our own troupe because we were essentially outcasts. It was made up of kids who didn't fit in, wore weird clothes, and had a hard time making friends. I honestly preferred this. While I have many negative memories of girl scouts, there's a few good ones that stuck with me. This is not one of them.

I don't remember what led to it, but if I had to think very hard and make a guess, it was probably one of those childhood preteen games. Truth or dare, or something similar. It started out as fun, all silly, giggles and laughs, but before I knew it I was being pinned down. I remember kicking, and yelling, and saying *no*, that I wanted it to stop. Children often do not take this seriously. They are like rabid little animals who are difficult to call off once they get a whiff of blood. I remember my clothes being ripped off me as I was held down, and being touched and explored like a science experiment. I remember wanting help from the person whom I was closest too in the troupe who had only laughed and then rolled over in their sleeping bag.

I am not a parent, so I can hardly speak on this. I can only give the perspective of someone who has experienced CoCSA, but **god damn** teach your children about consent. Actually, educate yourself about consent and how it goes beyond penetrative sex. If you don't learn to respect your children's boundaries, and in turn teach them boundaries are to be respected they will tear your clothes off like

little hyenas as a girl scout sleep over and then touch, tickle, rub, pull, pinch, and put their fingers in and around parts of their friends against their protests. It is so important from a young age to understand that *your body is yours*, that people *must ask to share it with you*. In turn other bodies are not yours and you must seek permission.

People do not understand how truly fucking important this is. It's the small things, like not forcing your child to hug people they do not want to touch, or tickling your child when they beg no, do not do that. Bodily autonomy is not something that we prioritize as a society. *(I also want to clarify here, that when I speak generally about the population around me, I am only speaking from my experience growing up in the United States. Perhaps it is different elsewhere.)*

We teach people that they must stay quiet, suck it up, and let their space and their boundaries be invaded. Not only that, but it's treated as rude, as disrespect when you don't let great uncle Jobathan plop a gross sloppy kiss on your cheek. When you constantly reinforce that your body is a tool to be used by others, then it makes the inverse true.

Others bodies are a tool to be taken and used.

I grew up from there into a teen whose worth was tied to their body, and how I could use it to please others. I grew up into a teen, who knew intrinsically, that my body did not belong to me. I grew up as a teen who knew that the only way another person would love me, was if I pleasure them, served them, or bent to their will. There were a lot of other factors in this; my mother putting hands on me, family members and other adults who said strange, sexually charged things to me every time they saw me, having a full body chronic disability that meant subjecting myself monthly to being man handled in a hospital, my mothers mental illness--which I assume to be OCD--that caused her to both hoard and demand her house was cleaned, keeping me on an ever shortening leash to preform manual labor. To make it worse, I grew up in the late 90s and early 2000's at a peak pro-ana* era, and I was a fat kid with a weird haircut and bad taste in music.

**Note: The pro-ana era was a specific time on the internet in the 2000's where people openly posted about anorexia. Pro-ana and pro-mia and just ana, along with things like thinspo are still things that exist on the internet today. You can read more about it here:*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pro-ana>

If you are struggling with an eating disorder please consider reaching out for help. It destroys your body in so many ways and it will not grant you the control you're looking for.

I was a serial long term dater, but in between partners I was king of one night stands. I felt as if I got power from seducing someone, from pulling release from them. This is an insane thing to say about myself as a teen. This is an insane thing for a teen to feel. Do not look away from it. It is uncomfortable, but we do not acknowledge this part of growing up. We close our eyes, and when faced with it, the first instinct is often to punish and not to protect, not to heal, not to ask what has happened here. There are two ways in which this is presented to society; either over glamorized TV shows that show promiscuity, or we hold a cross up and hiss, and refuse to acknowledge budding sexuality and how it should be handled safely.

For the record, I don't think the former is responsible for teens having sex. I don't believe in censorship. I believe in sitting down and speaking openly to your family about unrealistic depictions in media, about what is age appropriate to watch, and how to be safe should they make certain choices.

After a particularly gut wrenching breakup I developed an eating disorder and lost a massive amount of weight in a short period of time. I'm talking like 75-80 lbs in around 7 months. Again, it was reinforced to me that my worth was tied up in my body and how desirable it was. I was around 19, and I had been cheated on and humiliated by someone older than me who was verbally and psychologically abusive. I decided I needed control over my life, and in a sick way I got that from bingeing and purging. I was finally considered "hot", a status I had coveted but never attained previously.

Suddenly all my weirdness melted away or became quirky. I had the exact same personality, but now I was viewed as a viable sexual option and therefor palatable, with my strangeness excused. Everyone and anyone told me I looked so fucking good, how did I do it?! I got compliments from my own family. No one questioned anything. I was chronically sick. I was born with a disability, and no one stopped to ask if I was getting worse. If something was wrong. No one thought twice about my thinning hair, or the smell of vomit embedded in my teeth.

I was encourage to not be such a shut in, and to try to make "actual" friends. So that's what I did. A girl a little older than myself came into chipotle where I worked, wearing a My chemical Romance shirt. I gave her my cell phone number when I rung up her order and told her to text me. She did. We talked, got to know each other, and eventually she invited me to a show. It was storming out, and there was no pathway to the abandoned concrete industrial garage where the show was being held. I remember I was wearing doc martens and my favorite From First To Last hoodie, a piece of merch I had managed to hold onto since I was 13. There was a makeshift bar set up. It was genuinely very cool. She introduced me there to her friend named Anthony who immediately took an interest in me.

I wish I could remember his last name because I would absolutely put him on blast. I've tried to find it, but I can't. He didn't have a big social media presence years ago when this happened so I wouldn't expect him to now.

Weeks later, after MCR girl and I had cemented our friendship, she brought me to a house party. The house ended up belonging to a boy who had the personality of an NPC that I had gone to high school with. Anthony was there.

I got way too drunk, and MCR girl left with her boyfriend to pick up pizza for the party. I stumbled out into the yard, and fell onto my hands and knees to heave and barf and spit up into the cold grass. Anthony followed me out, with a glass of water, and a strange pill, one that I think we can all guess what it was. He pushed it into my mouth, made me drink water, and dragged my limp body upstairs.

This is where I became an object. Not a willing participant, but a comatose canvas for terrible fantasies. Not only did he rape me, but he was violent about it. He slapped me, choked me, yanked my nipple piercings. I remember my vagina was so dry, and no lube or spit being used. I think it's one of the worst feelings ever, to have the papery sensitive skin of your vagina be caught and pulled and torn by an unwelcome entrance. I cannot imagine it actually feeling good for my rapist either? I wonder if he could not feel the burn, or if the brutality of it turned him on.

He drugged me, he penetrated my slack body, and the whole while he beat the shit out of me. I had my partner read through the first draft of this and he told me I didn't have to share so many details, I didn't have to relive it like this. It feels good though, to finally get it off my chest in it's entirety. It feels empowering to say without flinching that this happens to people. This happened to me.

My friend returned and entered the room, and I thought... *my angel*. My salvation. When she got closer though she giggled. She told me it looked like I had a wild night. She put my panties back on me, because I couldn't. She put my shorts and hoodie back on me, because I couldn't, and she drove me home. She didn't even make sure I made it to the front door, just dumped me in the backyard.

The worst part of all of this is you are probably reading these words with utter disgust, bile splashing up as your stomach turns at the thought of being so thoroughly violated. When told to you from the way I experienced it, you are sure this is rape. But the worst part is, I was not. I blamed myself. *I got too drunk, I shouldn't have let my guard down, I shouldn't have been alone with a boy, I didn't fight him off of me so I must have wanted it and I just regret it.*

This is the rhetoric that is embedded into us. We are taught to blame ourselves, we are taught there is no victim, just a silly little girl shaped thing, and their silly little pussy, having too many silly little drinks. I was a dumb sore slut at best, and an evil soul sucking succubus at worst. I did not realize this was rape, and a horrible case of it, and until I shared this story with a casual situationship years later, and he looked at me in utter fucking horror, that I realized what had happened to me.

We can blame me, for the crime of having an inviting hole pushed into the clay of my body solely for two purposes: society's pleasure, and for populating society. We can blame MCR girl for leaving me alone, for not questioning the state I was in, and for not making sure I got in the house okay. But I think those are both incorrect. Why should I need babysat? It's not my fault, nor MCR girls. I will admit she isn't a *great* friend but that still doesn't put her at fault.

It is completely entirely the fault of the person who thought he was owed access to my body, and went through the motions of drugging and violating me. Yes, I agree, MCR girl could have handled that entire situation differently, but neither of us should have ever even been subject to that situation. He was a good friend of hers! What reason would she have to believe Anthony would do that to someone. *At what point do you realize you are close to someone waiting to bestow so much violence.* No one wants to look at the people they surround themselves with and admit that they chose to trust someone with a blackened sour heart. What factors of society and upbringing have merged together in a perfect storm to make so many people think that they are owed the pleasure of another person's body.

Not only is the patriarchy at play here, but capitalism is. I would say ableism as well. We are not more than our work ethic, we are not more than our input and output ratio to society. If you are not more than what you can do for the capitalist machine, then your body is not yours. Your body is a tool, owed to everyone around you. You owe your body to your job, and are expected to suffer through migraines from harsh fluorescent lighting, backaches, back pain, neck pain, shoulder pain, from lifting, stocking, sitting up straight to type for 9 hours a day, whatever it is that requires you to over extend what you physically can do. In this way it is very easy to take all the little girls of society and teach them "and one more thing. Your job gets your body, but whoever wants it will take your soul."

Ableism goes so hand in hand with capitalism that what I'm saying may sound outrageous but we are constantly taught that we are only deserving of humanity if we can give. We are only deserving of humanity if we can create a life. We are only deserving of humanity if we can work. We are only deserving of humanity if we can serve. We are no longer deserving of humanity even if we can incubate life. We are no longer deserving of humanity unless we spread our legs for those who ask, and then if we do not spread our legs for those who ask they will be pried apart, and we be punished for the crime of safeguarding ourselves. And when our body no longer works, no longer produces life, no longer produces labor, no longer produces pleasure in those that leer at us we are discarded.

Much later in life, later in the timeline of assault I endured, salt was rubbed in the wound Anthony left. I had been assaulted since then, but Anthony bruised me so bad that it reached my mind, my memories, and left little purple and green spots pressed hard into the meat of me. My brother was out drinking with friends, and though where I grew up is a big city, it is also actually quite small. This makes it easy to run into people removed by one... two... three... degrees. When I was emaciated, especially when I shaved my head, my brother and I looked more like twins. It was no surprise Anthony recognized him. What I'm told from there is that Anthony walked up to my brother (YEARS after the incident), and bragged in great detail about what he did to me. My brother then turned around and punched him once in the face, hard enough to knock him over. My brother and Anthony are both relatively small men so in hindsight its funny to imagine the short on short violence.

If you hear this story and think my brother is some kind of hero, I regret to inform you that you are the problem. My mom heard this story, learned about my assault and what happened, and thought it would be a fun party anecdote. She showered my brother with affection and praise, and did not once think to ask me if I was okay. No one asked what kind of damage he left behind. I had to hear my mother retell the story with glee, right in front of me. She let anyone who would listen know how her super cool son "*punched my rapist*". It was gruesome to hear, to endure. I told her this wasn't okay, but she's never respected my boundaries. *Ha!*

She has never respect my "no". This, perhaps, is why I thought it futile to fight back. I was taught that "no" didn't mean a damn thing. Or that when it did mean something, it meant that I was ungrateful. With my "no" never respected, and my boundaries never a priority, I got a call from a friend while #MeToo was trending on social media. My mom had shared *my story* but retold it, making my brother the center of it on facebook. She went on to talk about how this all effected her and hash tagged it with "me too."

Not even my story of my own rape belongs to me.

I didn't feel connected or tethered to anyone or anywhere. I was in pain, physically. I was in anguish, emotionally. I couldn't be alone with my thoughts, and spent a large portion of my awake time going out and socializing. I'm really a shut in now, but I continued to encounter men so abhorrently scummy.

A man living with a friend of mine was obsessed with me. He threatened his room mates, that if I ever slept with them he would hurt them or hurt himself. He was violent, he spied on me. He threw my things. He fucked me while he was stone cold sober, when I was so drunk I couldn't stand on my own.

This is rape.

He did this in my friends apartment, while my friend and his room mate were home. Later when he became more aggressive and unhinged I was blamed for indulging him. When he came back into our lives years and years later, and I reacted with fear, both men laughed it off.

That was the past, why am I so scared?

I visited a friend across the country after he had to suddenly leave the state. We were so close before he left. I missed him terribly, and I stayed in a hotel with him so that I wouldn't be alone in an unknown area in a state I was unfamiliar with. We decided to casually hook up, even talked about in detail beforehand. The next night, I told him I wasn't interested. He wouldn't take no for an answer, and

wrapped me up in bed sheets to try to hold me down. He laughed and laughed as I yelled no over and over and fought to untangle myself from the sheets. I spent that night in the bathroom, on the cold tile floor after I managed to escape and lock myself in. I'm claustrophobic now.

This is rape.

I had been hanging out with a kitchen boy from my job waiting tables. We were in a long-running on again off again situationship. I felt it had reached the end of its run, and I told him multiple times I was done having sex with him. I told him I was done seeing him. He was sad, got too drunk in the aftermath, and couldn't get himself home. I lived in a studio and conceded to letting him laying in my bed and snuggle. He asked if I would reconsider having sex and I said no. That did not stop him from climbing on top of me and entering me. I remembered in those moments, quietly, being drugged and being hurt. So I just laid there. I let him enter me, I did not fight back as he used my body to get himself off, and after I crawled into my own bathroom, and called a friend sobbing to talk through it.

This is rape.

I was dating a boy with eproctophilia, and told him I unfortunately didn't share his enthusiasm about that particular kink. I told him that I didn't think I could do it, and that I also had no interest in trying. Despite that conversation, he decided in the middle of foreplay that he was going to blow air into my ass without asking. To see if he could get me to fart. In hindsight I like to laugh about "fartboy" but the lengths people will go, even in intimate settings, is horrifying.

This is rape.

Access to a body can come with rules, access to a body can be taken away. One okay is not a free-for-all, Partners are not to be owned, they do not owe a fetish debt. A no is not something that can be talked out of.

I was at a bar on halloween, with someone who I had been friends with for a very long time and their partner. They introduced me to someone new. This person was so charismatic, so fucking likable. I took an instant shine to him. He was fun, he was a good story teller, he offered to buy us drinks. He was by all accounts kind.

As we sat around the table in our costumers I ended up in a one on one conversation with him. I do not know what possessed this man to tell me, a stranger to him, the story that tumbled from his mouth. He told me about how his friend group had a rift in it at the time. Two of the people in it "slept together". Except this girl, she was accusing the other person of assaulting her. He told me about how she only said it because she didn't like him, she was crazy. He told me that she was flirting with him the whole night, so if anything *she had assaulted him*. His logic behind that was that "she had tricked him into sleeping with her" by being drunk and flirty.

I looked to my long time friend with utter fucking horror in my eyes, and he shrugged. He wouldn't say anything, except that "yea well she was probably making it up."

A quick note while I tell this story--I do not like to play gender essentialism, because assault and rape and the patriarchy, while perpetuated by men, also effects men. Men are assaulted and not believed. I myself, do not identify as a woman, and I do not want to diminish myself down to the sum of my parts even though this piece is about bodies, so I will not say something like "vagina haver" to refer to my

gender. But it would be irresponsible of me not to acknowledge the privilege cis men have, especially when it comes to letting other cis men know they are out of line.

When my friend, a cis man, would not say something to other person, also a cis man, about that being wrong I tried to weigh in. My friend shushed me, and the man telling the story didn't care. He didn't give a fuck about my opinion. He would have most likely respected my friend's opinion much more, and probably at least listened to what he had to say.

Instead what happened was, I told him how absurd that was to side with a rapist, and it went poorly. I had a severe panic attack, the intensity of which was honestly kind of impressive. The world halted for a moment as the realization of what these two were saying, were implying, washed over me.

My brain lit up with red alarms that this *wasn't a safe place*, and those two *weren't safe people*. Especially to be drinking around. The logic that the woman is at fault in that scenario, for the tired old excuse of *leading someone* on, leaves me to believe that there are probably other people who have been assaulted by this utter shit stain of person.

I stepped outside of the bar and around the corner of it and cried. I cried hard as the interaction brought up memories of the things I had been through. I cried as I thought about all the times men refused to ask for consent before just trying to take what they wanted. The amount of times someone's touched me as if they are sneaking up to take something forbidden, and I've said no. The way they will pout and grind their pathetic little crotches into you.

I cried hard heaving sobs as I thought about the way this man was so casual about it, about what counted as *consensual* to him. I cried hard wracking sobs as I thought of that poor girl who is about to lose her whole friend group for being brave enough to speak up. I cried for my shattered perception of my long time friend, over a man who preferred to quiet me and make sure I didn't make *a scene*. I cried over him refusing to speak up.

All he had to do was speak up.

If you want to help survivors of assault, make yourself someone who can be trusted. Do not stand around quietly as people you know perpetuate rape culture. Listen to victims and take them seriously when they come forward. A lot of people need to educate themselves on what happens to your brain when it experiences trauma. It is often VERY hard to recall or retell something that happens, your brain switches small details. People use this as a "gotcha" to say victims are lying, but it's very very hard to recall exactly what happens. Our brains are trying to protect us.

Here's some links on how to speak to someone who is a survivor of sexual violence
<https://rainn.org/show-up-speak-out-step-in/how-to-talk-with-survivors-of-sexual-violence/>

The same website also has some helpful tips with how to recognize when your child is at risk of sexual violence
<https://rainn.org/prevention-tips-for-parents-caregivers/for-parents-and-caregivers-protecting-and-supporting-kids/>

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual assault, you are not alone. RAINN's National Sexual Assault Hotline offers *free, confidential, 24/7 support* in English and en Español.

Call 800.656.HOPE (4673)

Chat at [RAINN.org/hotline](https://rainn.org/hotline)

Text “HOPE” to 64673