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Stolen Innocence

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Stolen Innocence

Magdalena Cortez

Looking back and thinking about an injustice that was done to me I can think of many, but one that comes back to me each time is when I was 15. Actually, it's been on my mind a lot this semester. It was all brought up again when one day, during a class discussion, we realized how that some people think that *not* talking about something makes it less real. I used to think like that. If I don't talk about an issue that had a huge impact on me, I tend to just pretend that it didn't happen.

It all comes back to me as if it were yesterday. I was 15-years-old. We were living in a new house, in a new city. I was sleeping in my new room. My mom had gone to work and my sister was sleeping in her room. I don't even want to mention the name...That person will be referred to as HE. HE came into my room early in the morning and got under the covers next to me pressing HIS body next to mine. It took me some time to fully wake-up and realize that it was HIM. I told HIM to stop and I sat up in my bed. HE murmured something and left. What the fuck was HE thinking? I couldn't believe it! I was so confused. I couldn't go back to sleep right away after that. I was extremely paranoid and kept imagining HIM coming back into my room. I quickly got up from my bed and locked my door. It took me some time to actually go back to sleep. I laid there crying, unsure of what to do. I knew it was not right, HE made me feel uncomfortable.

I woke up and got ready for school, not really school, it was technically still summer. I had to go to school that morning to take an exam. As I was preparing my food in the kitchen HE walked in through the back kitchen door. HE walked a bit towards me and looked me in the eye. HE said sorry about what had happened. HE told me not to tell my mom or María, my sister, because that would only ruin things. (I'm getting so frustrated writing this). Looking back now and realizing what HE said to me makes me want to yell and tell HIM off. I can't believe HE had the audacity to turn this

around and make me feel guilty about “ruining” things. I had trusted this person. At that point all I felt was embarrassment and guilt, which probably explains why I never told anyone until recently.

After that day, I never felt comfortable in that house ever again. I still pretend like nothing happened between us. I have only told two people and that was only recently. It still affects me. It affects me in very personal ways that I am still trying to overcome. I almost came close to telling my family one night, but I guess I chickened out. I was recently asked by this incredible woman, who so happens to be my mentor, why we, women, feel like the “chickens” and I honestly don’t have one answer. I think it all comes back to what we were taught growing-up.

I know if I tell my family they won’t judge me, but I feel if I tell others they may question me and ask what I did to that person to provoke HIM. I think that is what scares me the most. Having people come up to me and blame me, the victim, when in reality that is all I am, a victim.

Months have gone by since this occurred, almost a year. One day HE picked me up from a party and it was night time. We were at a red light. I can’t recall the exact words, because like I said earlier, I tried to pretend like it never happened and blocked it out of my memory. HE took my hand into HIS, already making me feel uncomfortable. I knew it was inappropriate! HE told me HE loved me, like a “man loves a woman”. I told HIM I didn’t feel that way. I thought of HIM differently. I was extremely uncomfortable, that red light seemed like eternity until it turned green. I couldn’t believe it again. A year later and it was all back. I realize that this is affecting me every day. I do have trust issues. I honestly don’t know how I opened up to some people. Back then I felt like I couldn’t speak-up. I was embarrassed and afraid, but most of all I felt ashamed. I now know that I shouldn’t have felt those things. It wasn’t my fault. I never asked for any of that to happen.

And I noticed that by me not stating HIS name on paper and capitalizing HIS pronoun gives HIM much power, which is true. HE still holds power over me because I have not confronted HIM about what HE did to me. HE sincerely took my innocence away from me. I’m not comfortable writing HIS name down

because someone might find it, but at the same time, each time I talk about this experience it's a way for me to cope and making it more real.

Writing this is extremely difficult. I feel like crying as I'm finishing this up. Perhaps this explains why I am the way that I am. I don't feel comfortable when I'm around HIM. I probably never will be again. I always feel like I'm being objectified when I'm around HIM. However, now I feel like I have the language to speak-up. Hearing many stories about survivors of sexualized violence and rape victims helps me see that I'm not alone. I'm just really thankful it never escalated or continued. This event will forever be a part of me, but it will not define me.