

Survivors share their stories

“I was scared to call myself a victim or a survivor because I don’t even really know what happened” - Montse Ricossa



Photo by Kevin Donovan

Junior Montse Ricossa recounts the details of an incident last May, including her own reluctance and doubt to admit that sexual misconduct had occurred at all.

1. What happened?

It happened last May. It was my best friend’s friend. He was high and drunk which was not a good combination. I was buzzed-ish. I had a huge crush on him

because he was gorgeous, really cute and could speak Spanish.

So we started talking, started kissing and at that point he performed oral sex on me. I was fine up until a few minutes in and then I told him I wanted to stop.

He didn’t stop cause he wanted to get me off or whatever, so I faked it and then he said it was his turn. He asked if I wanted to perform oral sex on him or have penetrative sex. Of the two, I would rather do penetrative sex, so I started doing that for a while, but then cause he was high he couldn’t finish that way, so I had to perform oral sex on him. Then he started getting very aggressive and grabbing my hair, which might have been his thing, but I took it the wrong way. He just said he was too high and we had to stop. He was supposed to drive me home the next day, so I went with another friend but I didn’t tell her cause it was one of her friends and so she doesn’t know it happened. I feel like it’s weird to tell her what happened because I don’t know how she would react to it. So that’s that story and I hadn’t - cause I went to Spain in fall term - seen him since then

cause it was one of the last weeks of school.

Now I’ve started seeing him on campus and that was really rough. So I started seeing a counselor again which was nice and he tried to help me through it. It’s been better and I’ve started placing myself in situations around him; having me control the situation has been very helpful. Before I would have panic attacks whenever I saw him.

They say they can help you get out of the situation, but there’s only so much you can do. You can’t take him out of the quad and you can’t take him out of the library. I know where he sits in the library, so I sit on the other side and sort of watch him. But I know where he is and I know I can leave and he won’t know that I was there.

I wanted to report it to Title IX afterwards because there was an event we were both going to

be at, and that was going to make it very difficult because I had to sit in the same room with him for two hours. So, they offered to get me out of the situation, but I just don’t like pulling out of things and doing that. I think it almost helped me try to overcome seeing him a lot and Title IX was nice, the counselor was really good. It’s just that the process would take 60 days and I would be barely done reporting it up to now, and I didn’t have any evidence of it because it happened in May.

2. Do you feel like the administration did enough?

With my situation, they did as much as they could have done within that time period. I think they did a lot of things in order to make me feel as comfortable in this situation cause there wasn’t much they could do. I wasn’t expecting it cause I knew people didn’t like Title IX, but in my experience, they helped a lot.

“It should be about learning and your education and prospering... I don’t like having to be scared at my school.” - Anonymous

1. What happened?

I’ve never really told anybody and it really sucks sometimes because I take a communications class and they are like “What’s the biggest adversity you’ve ever gone through?” but I’m just scared to say it. Especially because this was before everything happened at school. This girl one time told me that if the girl is drunk then it’s her fault. So, hearing little comments like that make me not want to say anything because I know it’s not my fault. It’s just really bad to hear somebody say it’s your fault and make you feel belittled. It makes me feel bad about myself and makes me feel bad about the situation. In June of 2016, I went to a party. I was with my friend and she was with this guy, and I was pretty drunk so I sat on the couch. Then I got really cold, so this guy told me to go into his

room and get a sweater with him. I said “yes,” but because I was really drunk and went upstairs, I sat down on the bed and then one thing led to another, and he just got on top of me. I tried to get him off but he wouldn’t. He kept grabbing me really hard. I got bruises all over my body and then I took pictures for evidence because I thought maybe I can do something with this, but I never did anything with it.

2. Do you feel like with everything that has happened the school should be more transparent with prospective students?

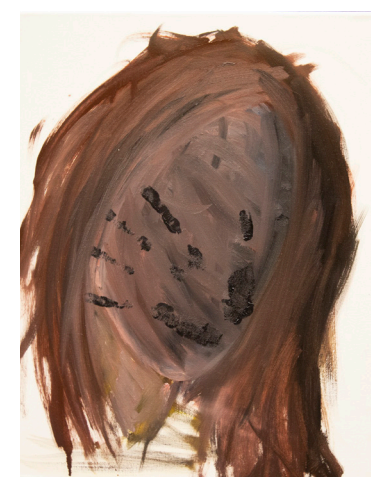
I feel like no one ever wants to advertise that something happened on their campus. So to kids that want to come here they’re not gonna say we have a sexual assault problem that no one ever addresses. I don’t know if there’s even a way to say that there are

problems at this school. I remember I asked my tour guide when I was coming here “what’s your biggest issue?” I wasn’t hoping, but I was assuming that something like that was going to come up, but she just told me that the wif sucks. I feel we need to have more safety precautions. Something better to make this school seem more safe. In the end we know we have to be more wary and cautious. It worries my parents, too. After I told them [about my assault] they gave me this huge lecture about “make sure you don’t drink, I know you’re going to but make sure you don’t drink a lot.” So not only does it make me feel unsafe, but it makes my family and loved ones feel unsafe, too. I feel like it shouldn’t be about that. It should be about learning and your education and prospering as a person and a student and then having fun. I hate

that I’m scared, it’s the worst. I don’t like having to be scared at my school.

3. Have you thought about reporting through Augustana now?

No, I mean especially now, not anymore. I mean, before when I came here to school I was like “Oh yeah, this place is really safe, there are people who care.” After this entire thing I’m more like “do they actually really care?” I’m concerned about my own safety and about how if something were to happen to me, how would the school take it? That’s really bad. That’s not something I should be thinking about. I should be thinking - if something were to happen - I would want to be able to tell the school and have them make sure things got sorted out. The fact that this guy didn’t even get suspended from his fraternity, I don’t know. It just blows my



Art piece by Kevin Donovan

Art is being used to replace a photo of a survivor who wished to remain anonymous.

mind how this happens because I’m like “Who would ever lie about something like that? And why are his consequences so little?” I don’t think he has any consequences.