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Anonymous,  
just 15.



“As my barely teen self begged for male attention from her crush, his friend saw an opportunity and took a piece of my innocence that I will never get back. The only thing that was on my mind at that moment was getting caught because I had invited a boy over without my mom knowing. My crush got what he wanted and took off to get some food, while clueless me was forced to entertain his friend. What seemed like the longest 30 minutes of my life ended with the only thing on my mind being oh God, what just happened? What did he do?”

## A lost girlhood

Story and Photo Illustrations By Abby Smith  
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Grace Smith,  
just 16.



“It was such a nice day. I was active and fit. Holding my body to a high standard, I decided to go for a jog, something I’ve done a few times. I was stopped by a truck, a bearded man, and a dog interrogated by a stranger. What was I doing? What was my name? Where did I stay? Do you wanna pet my dog? Just come here for a second. My heart was pounding more than it ever had on a run. My body screamed at me to fly, so I ran. He watched me run, telling me to come back. In the neighborhood I grew up in, in a beautiful place hidden away by the comfort of trees, I never felt safe again.

Heather Smith,  
just 10.



“You should really be able to trust your family. I was 10 and hanging out with my 13-year-old cousin in my room. We have done this a million times, but this day, it was different. He kept asking questions about boys and if I had ever been kissed “No, of course not, I’m 10,” He laughed, so I thought OK, that’s over. So I got up to get something out of my closet; when I turned around, he was there. He had the door blocked and said, “If you want out, give me a kiss.” I said no. He wouldn’t move, no matter how hard I pushed. The laugh he made still gives me chills when I think about him. God must have heard my pleas to let me out because my mom came to the door and told us dinner was ready. Till this day, I still wonder what would have happened if my mother wouldn’t have come to the door.”

# 68 seconds

## Prevalence of sexual assault should not be normalized

**By Grace Giles**  
Multimedia Journalist

One sexual assault occurs every 68 seconds according to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network. Rape culture is rapidly becoming normalized, perpetrators are getting away and victims are being silenced. As sexual violence gets normalized it becomes accepted as a natural part of society, but sexual assault is not normal and should not be normal.

College students fall into the age group, 18-24 and are at the highest risk of experiencing sexual assault, according to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, or RAINN. It is essential to realize 13% of all students experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence or incapacitation, according to Samantha Kauffman, sexual assault counselor at the East Texas Crisis Center. The question we must ask ourselves is, why is this so normal?

### ONE.

Sexual assault has become normalized due to lack of consequences. Perpetrators are walking free and victims are being oppressed.

“Social norms that condone violence, use power over others, traditional constructs of masculinity, the subjugation of women, and silence about violence and abuse contribute to the occurrence of sexual violence. Oppression in all of its forms is among the root causes of sexual violence,” according to The National Sexual Violence Research Center.

Because if people do not have to take responsibility for their crimes, they will continue to commit them.

The media plays a part in rape culture and victim blaming has become common. Victims often blame themselves because everyone else does. “There’s a lot of rape culture in the media, a lot of victim blaming, and I think it’s just important for students to know that it doesn’t matter how you’re dressed, it doesn’t matter anything like that, if you are assaulted it is not your fault. You didn’t deserve it and there are resources available to help you heal,” Kauffman said.

### TWO.

Victims of sexual assault often do not get justice. Out of every 1,000 sexual assaults, 975 perpetrators will walk free, according to a study done by RAINN.

These statistics may not seem local; students may feel like these numbers don’t directly affect them but, in 2022, there were five reported sexual assaults on Tyler Junior College campuses, according to the 2022 Clery Report. The Clery Report is a document colleges are required to give to the public. This report shares crime statistics on campus.

As much as students wish this statistic didn’t include them, they are all at risk of becoming a victim of sexual assault. “We do know that college students 18-24 are three times more likely to experience sexual violence compared to all other women,” Kauffman said.

People who survive sexual assault are left with much more than physical pain. “Survivors of sexual assault can experience some PTSD symptoms – they might have trouble sleeping, they might get anxious, they might struggle in school, they might isolate themselves from others or get depressed,” Kauffman said.

### THREE.

TJC tries to accommodate for students who suffer from the side effects of sexual assault, through Title IX of the Education Amendments which states “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...”

Under Title IX, discrimination on the basis of sex can include sexual harassment, rape, and sexual assault. It also can include dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking, according to the TJC website.

TJC has emergency phones placed in two locations at the main campus. These phones immediately alert campus police that there is an emergency requiring their assistance. TJC also has a way for victims and witnesses of sexual violence to report the incident anonymously. To anonymously report an incident, search “anonymous sexual assault reporting” on TJC.edu.

Victims of sexual assault are also able to seek help from the East Texas Crisis Center. “You are not alone, it is not your fault and we are here to help,” Kauffman said.

### FOUR.

**One sexual assault occurs ever 68 seconds. In the amount of time it took for you to read this article, four sexual assaults occurred.**

## Anonymous, just 17.



“Seventeen. The age of new beginnings, focusing on myself and what the future holds. Feeling grown but still underage. I knew what I was getting myself into with the pathway I paved, the parties, the alcohol, the music, but most importantly, the boys. Flirting is fun until no doesn’t mean no anymore. One drink turns to two, which leads to many more. That was the night I realized what it felt like to not be in control of myself anymore. My body being held down, my tears running down my face. But he was drunk too. Did that make it OK? Did it make it OK that when I awoke the next morning, hurt and confused with my clothes on backward but he told me good morning? Did it make it OK that he said I ‘wanted it’ but couldn’t remember the entire night? It was not OK. It was not OK when he told me he was taking care of me all night. It was not OK when he told me I said “no,” but he thought I was joking. It was not OK, and it will never be OK. No means no, no matter what.”

This photo essay was made to highlight the issue of sexual harassment and assault in the U.S. Each woman tells their story in their own words and how it impacted their lives moving forward. Disclaimer: The DrumBeat was given permission by these women to use their photos, names and stories in this way. Some have chosen to remain anonymous for this article.