

HOW I CONNECT AND STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE AS A SURVIVOR

When I was 10 years old I was raped by a neighbor who was 18 years old at that time. I had never told anyone about the rape because he told me "if you tell anyone about this, I will find you and kill you". Those words STILL ring in my head every day. Through my young childhood I kept that trauma to myself. I hadn't seen him in almost a year and then when I was 20 years old I had thought I had seen him in a local store and all the trauma hit me and at that point I knew I was more mature and I knew I needed to voice my trauma. That evening I went to the local police station and I reported the abuse to a detective. Ironically the perpetrator was supposed to be released from prison the day I had reported the sexual assault. The detective spoke with the perpetrator, and the perpetrator openly admitted in detail to the abuse and through a long court process he was convicted of kidnapping and rape and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Several years after I received justice, my father and I went and got a tattoo on our forearms which states "; IGY6" (see photo below). The tattoo has several meanings to it, but overall it tells my story of being a survivor of sexual assault and being able to advocate to others that they are not alone and that they too can receive justice! When people see my tattoo they ask what it means and I explain my story to them and by me putting a tattoo on my forearm it brings out a conversation to where I hope one day I can help someone receive justice just as I did on November 30, 2015.

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THE STORY BEHIND THE TATTOO



My father has been in the US Army for over 20 years, and he has always told me "I got your 6" and the abbreviation for that saying is "IGY6". I got your 6 means "I got your back". Additionally, there is also a semicolon in my tattoo. The semicolon in my tattoo represents the continuation of my life and to not lose hope as there was a time when I was suicidal due to the sexual abuse and dealing with the trauma it caused me through childhood which lingered into my adulthood. I honestly never thought that I would ever receive justice regarding my sexual assault, but I never lost hope and had faith in the system. The semicolon represents the semicolon project which was created to help those who are considering suicide. The semicolon is used in a book when an author was going to end their sentence but still had more to say. You can add a semicolon to the end of a sentence and continue with another thought. The idea behind this is to let those considering suicide know that their story is not over. Put a semicolon at the end and continue moving forward. My dad's semicolon is at the end of his tattoo because my dad is the continuation in my life. He advocated for me to get the justice I deserved and through the military he taught soldiers about suicide prevention and how he "has their backs". The heartbeat behind the tattoo shows a continuation of life. After the perpetrator in my case was sentenced to prison time, I could take a breath of fresh air and finally move forward in my life and know that there is hope to end sexual violence it just takes advocacy and strength to step up for what is right!

So overall, I personally help to end sexual violence by having a conversation piece tattooed on my forearm in order to get people to ask the meaning of it. As a survivor of childhood sexual assault/rape, I want people to know that they are not alone and that I am willing to help walk them through the process I took when I was 20 years old, because they too deserve justice!