

ME TOO!

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I am writing this for the girl in front of me on the bus, who edges away from the old man beside her when his hand slides along her thigh. I see your head lower in shame as everyone watches, but no one speaks up to defend you. I silently plead with you to crush his creeping fingers between your legs. Give him a mark so shameful that he can never lay those hands on anybody else.

For my friends trying to hold their heads high when the boys hurl insults like stones from across the road. I know that sometimes these names are more familiar than our own, and we all wish we could fade into the brick walls behind us.

But you are so much more than blind catcalls at four o'clock on a Tuesday afternoon. You are vibrant, and loud. Your sharp tongue is the most powerful weapon in your arsenal. Do not be afraid to open fire.

For the girls I see at every party and disco I have ever been to. It doesn't matter how short your skirt was, or how much you had to drink. What matters is that this night was supposed to be your movie moment, a snapshot of your teenage years to look back on when everything else fades away. Instead you spend it with a feeling in the pit of your stomach that none of this is right, but he is so overpowering that sometimes it seems he fills the whole room. You forget how to say stop.

Do not let this be the end. Don't build a tower to lock yourself away. You were brought into this world kicking and screaming. Never stop.

For the men that eyed us up like women when we were barely girls, and the songs they write about the damage they will do when we finally turn 18. For the boys outside the frat house chanting "No means Yes". For the President who will get elected no matter where we want to grab me. I hope the next woman you look at carries a switchblade in her bra, just for you. I hope she carves that smile you tormented her for into your side so you never forget her name.

For house keys wedged between my fingers when I walk alone at night. For my headphones, my clenched fists, the streetlights on a main road. Thank you for being my oldest and dearest friends, for making sure I always get home safely.

For the boy who stands in the shadows, too afraid of what everyone will think to make his voice heard, I see you. You matter.

For the people desperately dusting their skin to figure out who has left all of these fingerprints. Your silence was not consent.

For the women who will never get to read this, because their stories ended in the darkest part of the club, behind the bins, or in their own homes. I am still searching for you in everybody that passes me on the street.

For everyone who has had 'no' erased from their vocabulary, who has been made to feel like their body was no longer theirs to own,

Me too