

A Four Letter Word Blessed Me

I believe in being grateful for tragedies. That being said, I am a very grateful person, who was once very much full of hatred. I was raped the summer before I started college, and let me tell you, being a survivor of any trauma is a hard thing and I have struggled with it greatly. I was raised Catholic and I can remember my mother frequently reciting the Franciscan blessing that spoke of God blessing you with discomfort, suffering, and anger. I don't think I ever fully understood the true meaning of that blessing until I was raped. It was only then that I heard the other parts of the prayer, the parts explaining, may you be blessed with such things so you may be inspired to help others.

Being raped filled my life with discomfort, suffering, and anger and for a long time following my rape I hated myself, God, and absolutely everyone in between. I knew every moment I felt hatred for myself or another person that those emotions were not what I wanted to be or who I was. I could remember being the outgoing comedian who loved everyone all throughout high school, but suddenly, I had been stripped of that. I wanted my life back. I wanted to be myself again, but somewhere in the trauma I had lost myself.

I told my therapist once how I felt, that I felt I had been stripped of my identity, and to my surprise, she said, "If you have lost yourself, then let's consider rebuilding you" and from that day on that is just what I have done. My rape allowed me to rebuild myself. I am strong, but gentle, independent and interconnected, questioning, but understanding, and most importantly passionate about people. I was blessed with discomfort, anger, and suffering, and those blessings inspired me to become a volunteer at a local women's center where I help other women recovering from sexual assaults.

Rape does not "define" me, but it is a part of my story and will affect me on some level as long as I live. While I cannot control or change the fact that I am a survivor of rape, I can control how I let it impact me and my life. I personally have chosen to be grateful for being raped. Being raped allowed me to make myself better and has given me a cause to dedicate my life to helping women recover from sexual assault and educating youth on how to be active bystanders. So, I believe in being grateful for tragedies.