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## **We believe you. Survivors of Campus Sexual Assault Speak Out.**

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Date of publication: February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Edition period: February 2017 – June 2017

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**To cite this article:** Vidu, A. (2017). We believe you. Survivors of Campus Sexual Assault Speak Out. [Review of the book]. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies*, 6(1), 1288-1289. doi: 10.4471/generos.2017.2597

**To link this article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.4471/generos.2017.2597>

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## Review

Clark, A. & Pino, A. (2016). *We believe you. Survivors of Campus Sexual Assault Speak Out*. New York: Holt Paperbacks. ISBN: 9781627795333

**T** This book is describing the problematic reality of the campus sexual violence in a very special way, through the voices of thirty-six survivors who spoke out against the issue and started to lead this struggle across the United States. The authors, Andrea Pino and Annie Clark are themselves brave survivors of sexual violence and leaders of Title IX complaints at their universities and also activists. Their stories contributed to not only create awareness about the issue, but also to mobilize student movements at several universities across their country.

“*We believe you*” is written by survivors and for survivors; very much focused on how the harassment is taking place, why it is so deeply happening in the university context; and especially the book pretends to emphasize the consequences that sexual violence manifest for survivors. The book is structured into five parts, besides the initial introduction and the final part of rights and resources. From the introduction, the story of Annie and Andrea got to impact the readers. The first part, *Before*, describe the social context where the victims came from, their personal situations, especially with the aim of making others to understand how hard is to suffer from sexual violence, not only for the person itself but also for the context in which she or he are developing. In this way, their journeys of healing and survivorhood make totally sense, mainly because the authors emphasize the lack of social positioning against this issue as well as the perfect image that society use to have regarding universities.

In the second part of the book, the survivors who gave their testimony for this explained *how it happened*, referring to the situation of their harassment. The survivors who described their background in the first part are incorporating here the sexual violence their suffered into their life story. The details and the deep way in which situations of rape and violence are described in this part, make the reader to better understand these disastrous episodes which may lead to create connection with this reality. In the third part of the book *trauma and betrayal* the victims talk about their experiences of dealing with the abuse in their everyday contexts. It is interesting to highlight the other people tolerance or lack of response, in front of this problem. Most of the university members and part of the society tend to not take any stand, or even worst to blame the victim for the situations that happened to them. However, other people's bravery helped the victims to go forward and to deal with the worst of the quotidian consequences as a result of what they suffered. Solidarity and peer support are key in this sense.

The fourth part *healing and everyday activism* starts with a description of concrete situations related to the condition of being a victim, such as losing interest in school, nightmares, fear and emotions. Sharing the experiences of trauma helped these survivors not to feel alone, to get stronger together, and also to realize that they were already activists. Their lives changed at that moment, feeling ready to contribute to the commitment for doing what they call "a culture shift" changing the dominant culture already prevailing in society, which for instance make some people to get more upset about a football losing than a sexual assault. The fifth part of the book, *declarations of independence*, the brave survivors who broke their silence along this book show how, in fact, this act is itself positive, for them and for the world. Their activism is based on previous work done on the issue and their stories have already influenced the future actions to be done. Supporting survivors is a revolutionary act and crucial for them to keep forward. Finally, the book ends by presenting some *rights and resources* for the victims. Listen, support, believe are key concepts to apply for each survivor' story, overcoming the victim blaming and standing always on the victim side, with no doubts.

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