When Texting and Sexual Consent Get Misconstrued

By Erika Gonzalez

The Signature granted anonymity to respect her privacy and allow her to share this traumatic experience.

Despite the obvious difference between a “yes” or “no” answer, still to this day, there are numerous cases of sexual assault being reported worldwide. Many of the cases often involve teens, and in the process the perspectives of why the assault occurred are revealed. It seems that the two most popular viewpoints are that the victim never verbally disagreed and didn’t move a muscle to stop the person from continuing sexual acts or simply that the victim was “asking for it.” Many teens don’t know what consent is: agreeing to engage in a sexual act willingly.

This fourteen-year-old female student wants to be able to get close to someone again without fear and paranoia but her sexual assault experience continues to traumatize and haunt her every day, so it makes it difficult for her to let anyone in and have any type of relationship with someone new. She doesn’t want to let the sexual assault hinder her from meeting new people and being social. However, with the assault replaying in her mind almost every day, it keeps her from focusing on the present and instead living the nightmare of her assault all over again. “It’s a routine. I can’t go a day without reliving those moments of assault,” she states.

The fourteen year old lives with her grandma and uncle. At the time of the sexual assault, she was only twelve years old. It all began when she first started texting a fifteen-
year-old boy who lived around her neighborhood. As a couple of weeks passed by, they decided to meet up at her house and sit outside her steps. As the time came closer to meet-up, she rushed to cancel the plans as she started to get a bad feeling about the whole event. “I was calling him to say that I couldn’t hang out but he was pretty insistent, so I kind of just gave in to get the whole meeting thing over with,” she states. “I thought to myself, my uncle is home. Everything is going to be okay,” she says.

When the fifteen year old boy arrived, he persuaded her to hang out in her backyard. “We were behind my garage and he started to kiss me. I kept telling him to slow down and relax because it felt like he was shoving his tongue down my throat,” she recalls. She says the boy ignored her comments and continued to kiss her in a rough manner. “I felt so uncomfortable in that moment. I kept trying to push him off and told him he had to go home,” she states. However, he simply ignored what she told him. “I’m not leaving until you go down on me,” the fifteen year old boy told her. “He gripped my hand, pulled me inside my garage and slapped me across my face, and said started threatening me,” she recalls. The fifteen year old boy then locked the garage door and told her that if she tried to deny him this, it wouldn’t do any good for her. “I told him that he has two nieces. What if someone was doing that to them? But he just gave me another slap across my face,” she recalls.

The teen recalls that the boy then gripped her by her neck and started to force her to commit sexual acts on him. “I tried to push him off but he was so much stronger than me. He had that advantage, but all I was thinking about was that, hopefully, my brother doesn’t come in to check on me because this is all my fault,” states the teen.

To this day, the young woman still feels that way. “I can never look at myself the same. I sometimes still look in the mirror and feel disgusted with myself,” she states. She talks about how it’s hard not to blame herself for the incident especially since the fifteen year old boy during the assault was constantly telling her it was. “He kept saying that I asked for this, that it was my fault because I let him come over and kiss me, that if I didn’t want him I wouldn’t have of let him kiss me,” she states.

In the article “What consent looks like,” it states that “when you’re engaging in sexual activity, consent is about communication. And it should happen every time. Giving consent for one activity, one time, does not mean giving consent for increased or recurring sexual contact. For example, agreeing to kiss someone doesn’t give that person permission to remove your clothes.”

Although this insight may seem like basic common sense, many teens do not think about consent in that way. For example, in the podcast “How much do teenagers know about sex and the law,” Al Vernacchio, a sexuality educator, states that “I think students in general have a very poor understanding of the legalities of sexual interactions. And so often sexuality education programs are not necessarily covering that area which, in this day and age, is something we absolutely have to include in any comprehensive sexuality education program.” Many perspectives can come into play when speaking to teens who do not know what sexual consent really is but a clear ‘Stop’ should be enough for someone to know that they need to put an end to whatever they’re trying to do.

In the article “The way we talk about sexting is failing our teenage girls,” it talked about how in a campaign against sexting, cyberbullying and digital dating abuse, “Comments from 462 girls between the ages of 12 to 18 showed that over two-thirds of girls had been asked for explicit images. When they received those requests, they often did not know how to respond. Young women sent nude pictures in the hope of gaining a relationship, but also as the result of coercion, including angry threats.”

According to Jenny Anderson in the article “The way we talk about sexting is failing our teenage girls,” it states that “a lot of parents and schools warn teens to avoid sending nude
photos. In practice, this often translates to asking girls not to send pictures to boys, since research shows that boys are four times more likely to pressure girls to send sexts than vice versa."

So what can we do to change this? According a Quartz article, it states that “To change that culture, we should spend less time telling girls what to do or not do, and more time helping girls internalize the knowledge that their role is not to serve as a sexual object for others’ satisfaction and how to navigate peer pressure from boys.”

Resources such as “Common sense media” have a sexting handbook for parents and teens to go through together, which includes lessons tailored for teens by discussing peer pressure, the law, and opportunities to practice refusal.” For example, the handbook when talking about pressure, states that “what if you want to say no, but you just feel so much pressure? It’s totally normal. For some people, the pressure to sext isn’t even coming from the person on the receiving end of the nude photos; it’s a more complicated kind of pressure coming from all around. We know the reality is that you may know sexting isn’t the wisest decision. But trust us: If the photo is leaked, it’s much, much worse than being called ‘lame.’ It can ruin people’s lives.”

The handbook also explains “Deliberate and accidental sexting.” For example it states “Sexting isn’t defined by any one fixed term. Sexting can be wanted or unwanted, and the exposure can be deliberate or accidental. Most sexting is deliberate, meaning that the person who sent it meant for it to be sent but receiving unwanted pictures is common as well.” The handbook gives a lot of information and how to go about situations that may occur.

In a book by Lisa Damour called Untangled, she explains how teens have red-hot emotions and a control center that’s still under construction, inviting “act now, think later” behaviors. In this context, “consent” too often depends upon boys’ power of persuasion, and not girls’ feelings about what they are ready for.
This school year, Hancock welcomed its newest member to the science department: Mr. Green, who teaches biology and chemistry. In a recent interview, he expands on his experience with transitioning into our school, saying how he’s excited to be here, and he tells us that he’d been looking at Hancock for a while.

Teachers need a bachelor’s degree, related work experience, and on-the-job training, in order to become one. According to labor statistics, as of 2016, the projected job growth for teachers is 8%, and the employment of teachers is 1,018,700 (2016-2026), with a 10 year employment change of 76,800. Also, as of 2016, the median annual pay for teachers is $58,030, but the average high school teacher annual pay is $56,310.

In the interview, I asked him a couple of basic questions including how many years of teaching experience he had prior to coming here, to which he responded that he had seven years. His love for biology and science started when he was in 7th grade and he participated in his science fair, where he studied the effect of different substances on this organism called daphnia. Daphnia is a common water flea. It looks like an amoeba.

He informs us that the decision to specifically teach here at Hancock was an easy one, and that he hadn’t really experienced any challenges in transitioning or adapting to our school. Part of his reasoning as to why Hancock was an easy decision was due to the fact that we are a Selective Enrollment school, and it’s an ideal school for him.

Mr. Green says that “a lot of things are different and good about Hancock. I think not much . . . everything’s pretty free-flowing and chill right now and good.” He also likes our collaborative working environment, and that is something he hasn’t experienced much of at other schools he’s taught at. “The idea of expectations, and students collaborating, working together” is going really well, according to Mr. Green, stating that it’s “really cool.” Our interview ended with him saying how Hancock is “definitely a really good school, and a dream opportunity, and [he’s] super glad to be here.”
A man holds a sign in direction of pedestrians walking down the sidewalk in downtown Chicago during the Women’s March in January.

On January 21st, two women help each other hold up a “We the People” flag while participating in the Women’s March.

A woman signs her name on “United against Hate” sign in downtown Chicago during the Women’s March.

Painting on South Carpenter St. depicts woman covered in the American flag holding a man wearing a Mexican sarape, a poncho.

Boys play a friendly game of basketball at Senka Park after school.
"When people say cancer I didn’t really pay attention to it that much," says Hancock senior Jose Jimenez. “It wasn’t until my brother got it and when he finished, I got it a month after and it just all became a big impact in my life.” He does not only struggle with grades and college applications but also with a life changing disease called cancer. “It is more challenging since I was at home and I missed a whole year of school and fell way behind," says Jose after surviving cancer.

Jose was diagnosed with Lymphoma in his chest making it hard for him to breathe and do his everyday activities as simple as walking (Lymphoma represents many different cancers of lymphocytes: about 35-60 different subtypes. White blood cells fight infections, but when having Lymphoma cancerous white blood cells are produced instead of the healthy white blood cells. This makes it easier to get an infection). Lymphoma is mostly common between the ages of 15 to 40 and even higher risk when over 55. Cancer is no joke, and Jose knew it the moment he was diagnosed. His doctors started with giving him chemotherapy, which meant using drugs and medication to shrink the cancer. Many people are scared of taking chemo. Studies show that knowing what chemo’s propose is gives the patient a better sense of control over the cancer treatment, and Jose was both physically and mentally prepared.

It was Jose’s junior year and he was in his P.E. class running confidently for his pacer test where he needed to run at least 50 laps to get a B. But as soon as he hit twenty five, his body got tired and he started to run out of breath. "I felt a lot of chest pain, and I was super tired and felt out of shape but I knew I wasn’t because I was able to do many other exercises” is what he remembers from the first day of getting symptoms. He got home that day and immediately told his mother. She made a doctor’s appointment. After several tests to ensure that it was no heart murmur or minor health issue, the doctor broke the news to him and his parents that he had cancerous tumor. “I looked over my shoulder at my parents and it broke them into pieces. Their eyes got watery. They tried to avoid eye contact with me, so I did too. I just thought of my funeral and everyone coming to Chicago for it," recalled Jose when facing that life changing moment.

After that day, the hospital became a second home for Jose with endless doctor visits. “It was one full week of chemo and then two weeks off chemo but that one week felt like 3 weeks because the doctors gave me stronger chemo doses,” states Jose. While in the process of chemo there were issues with insurance money not covering the cost; however, a five thousand dollar check was donated to Jose’s bills from a generous man named Andrew. Andrew had a brother who had cancer and had many donations given to him to pay his medical bills. When the time came, his last wish was for Andrew to donate that to other cancer fighters.

Jose and his brother created an inseparable bond, and cancer is the reason for it. No one else understood the pain they had to go through both physically and emotionally. Jose confessed that he feels relieved now that he is cancer free but in many ways feels pressured because people assume he is a hundred percent healed but he has to remind them that scars never really heal.

He confesses that his journey was easy whereas his brother’s was an “outpatient” situation which meant he would have to stay in the hospital because of how critical he was. Jose had a safe place in his room where he could either play video games or draw his feelings. “Playing video games and hearing my friends argue in my headset would just take me back to a normal day and that was my cure, for me to think everything was going to be okay.” This is what Jose believes helped him survive cancer.

Hancock Student Survives Cancer His Junior Year

By Krishna Angulo

Jose Jimenez (right) and his brother, who are both cancer survivors

Photo courtesy of Jose Jimenez

Hancock HS  The Signature
That same day when we all got home, we got a text that we advanced to quarterfinals. WE WERE SHOCKED. Everyone was celebrating in the text, sending pics of the proof we won, and we were just overall happy. We snapped back into game mode and practiced the rest of the week or at least tried to. Our bout was against three top twenty teams; we proceeded in our normal routine of praying before our bout and relaxed our minds.

As the bout progressed it looked apparent that winning was a long shot, as the seasoned vets of the other teams fed the judges with lyrical content from seemingly the black god himself. It was a beautiful bout. We ended up coming in fourth but also ended up knowing who we were. This was their first time for my teammates in LTAB! And the second year the school had a competing team. We made it to quarter finals. We didn't lose this year. In fact, no teams ever lose—they only learn.

We learned, and I learned, that the future of Hancock's poetry team Triple 7 is in good hands moving forward with Eveny as captain, Big Ceno, Maria, and Cam right along with her—because they love poetry as much as LTAB.
Life with Dogs
Photos by Samantha Andrade

For years, dogs have been known as man's best friend. They're always there whether to be security, find lost things, or just keep our couches warm. Dogs are a foundation of our society. Without them, a slice of life would disappear for pet owners.

I wanted to capture this slice of life and the importance that dogs bring. These five dynamic duos live for one another. They all have different stories, but share the common goal of making each other's lives a little bit less empty. They don't realize it all the time, but through the days that seem hard and "ruff," people and their furry best friends make the most out of every second.

The Signature is published every month October through June in print and online versions on our Website. Submit your art, photography, or writing. See Mr. Salazar in 201.

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Hancock College Prep High School
A Chicago public neighborhood high school with a Selective-Enrollment program serving mostly Southwest side students that remains committed to preparing all students to be critical thinkers and life-long learners

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