I Don't Surrender: An Anthem for Survivors of Sexual Violence

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There is an indescribable strength that accompanies survival. Whether it be from pain inflicted by others, natural accidents, or any unforeseen trauma, there is a necessary process that requires us as human beings to push forward and continue. I have witnessed, as a fellow survivor of sexual violence and a creator of music, how transformative singing, songwriting, and creating can be on a healing journey. As my final project at BYU, I presented a music video of my original song, “I Don’t Surrender,” featuring numerous other survivors of sexual trauma. We found differences in our stories, but commonality in our pain and pursuit of healing. We created something, both visually and musically, that will change lives, encourage others to come forward, and take the steps to rehabilitate their hearts and minds.

The idea of using music to heal trauma, specifically sexual trauma, is not a new concept. Musical interventions have proven to create an increase in, “self-expression and self-esteem, and improve interpersonal communication” (MacIntosh 2003). Many other musicians have done projects similar to my own in the music industry. These artists, whose power and messages have changed conversations surrounding sexual violence, have and empowered women to come forward. While the number of songs may be few, their impact is immeasurable.
When I would hear songs or watch a music video about surviving abuse, my healing process was validated and enhanced. As a survivor of child sexual abuse, I have spent years attempting to heal wounds that seem to unceasingly open again. Healing is not a linear process where our minds are shifted from pain to empowerment. As I began my journey to recovery, it was the women around me—specifically other survivors—who changed my heart. When I saw the strength of their minds, hearts, and lives, it called me to consider the frail but burning power of my own. Every woman featured in this video is a survivor of sexual violence. My hope is that the power of this song and these women’s stories will bring awareness to the prevalence of sexual violence and encourage other survivors to own their stories and recognize their incomparable inner strength. I hope that this will encourage other artists, motivators, and public figures to be more outspoken about the epidemic among women.
I Don’t Surrender: The Lyrics

You tainted rooms
in the place I call home
While you took away the power
of a life that was my own
The girl that loved to love
is now afraid to step outside
The trust she had remembered
it suddenly became a lie

But I grew up
and I finally felt the pain
I tried to toughen up
and just prepare for the rain

But I shut my mouth
prayed those memories would fade away
With every word, person, and picture
I was reminded of those dark days
This endless fight, this torture
it was eating me alive
but everyday I’d whisper
a prayer that somehow I’d survive

“I CAN BE CHANGED BY WHAT HAPPENS TO ME, BUT I REFUSE TO BE REDUCED BY IT.” — MAYA ANGELOU
But I grew up
and I finally felt the pain
I tried to toughen up
and just prepare for the rain

Well, it came down
but I did too
So now I’m just overwhelmed
I’m breaking but I can’t break down
I won’t break down
‘Cause I don’t surrender
No, I don’t surrender
I may have lost my mind
but I will not lose this battle
You may have found some excuse
but that guilt goes on forever

And I don’t surrender
I don’t surrender
I don’t surrender
So, I won’t surrender
Check out the video at the link below:

https://youtu.be/4kMjUJEgY5A

BIBLIOGRAPHY