

It Happens Here 2023: Supporting Survivors of Sexual Violence

By Mei Dwyer-Frattalone, Amelia Grosskopf, and Daisy Kulina

It Happens Here (IHH) is an annual anti-sexual violence tradition founded in 2012. The event aims to honor survivors by promoting awareness, solidarity, and healing through the sharing of stories. IHH 2023 will be held on April 27th at 7:00 pm and will follow last year's structure of both survivors telling their own stories onstage and readers bringing voice to anonymously submitted stories. While the event itself does not occur until next spring, the tradition of IHH does not occur on a single date, and so planning, organizing, and subsequent impact spans the entirety of the school year and beyond. For example, forming our organizing team over this past semester and outlining our intentions for IHH 2023 has been a process full of solidarity and consciousness-raising. Thus, as an inclusive event dedicated to *all* survivors in our campus community, we want to open the organizing process to the whole of the Middlebury community.

Over a decade after its founding, It Happens Here is still relevant. Sexual violence is a prevalent issue on our campus and beyond. Further, we believe there is still a wide range of ways that survivors are silenced, and therefore we are motivated to highlight survivors and their stories through IHH 2023. Rather than focusing on perpetrators of sexual violence, we are committed to positively transforming our campus community by focusing on those who have experienced sexual violence. We believe that community healing is necessary to fuel the movement against sexual violence, and it all starts with survivors. By amplifying the voices of survivors, we shed light on the complexities of sexual violence and begin the work of shifting the Middlebury community away from rape culture.

Carrying on the tradition from IHH 2022, IHH 2023 aims to create a space for all survivors to be heard and believed. Speaking from experience, sharing our stories is emotionally challenging and requires extreme vulnerability. In recognition that healing from sexual trauma looks different for everyone and that survivors have different levels of comfortability in speaking on their experiences, we offer multiple forms in which survivors can share their experiences if they choose to do so. We wish to be accommodating and supportive of survivors, and thus survivors may share their own stories, anonymously submit their stories to be read by another, or submit creative submissions to be displayed at the event. We envision an inclusive environment that promotes healing and fosters solidarity among individuals with various lived experiences.

We aspire to create transparency around the communities on campus that tolerate and perpetuate rape culture in any way. As a result of this event, we hope to shape our campus community into one that is more honest and accountable about its history of tolerance for sexual violence. But, more importantly, we hope to shape a community that is willing to be proactive in preventing

future instances of sexual violence. Throughout the process of making IHH 2023 happen, our goal is to prioritize survivors' healing as we help transform the Middlebury community into a safer environment.

We're looking for anyone interested in helping to put on It Happens Here (IHH) this coming April 2023. We will not be affiliated with any student organizations, college departments, or other pre-existing groups, but we are looking for individuals who are passionate about supporting survivors to join our team. Please join us if you're interested in supporting us by:

- Joining planning meetings
- Postering
- Volunteering to read survivors' stories at the event
- Compiling stories
- Serving as a crowd manager at the event
- Organizing readers
- Helping to create an art exhibit

Please reach out to dkulina@middlebury.edu, ndwyerfrattalone@middlebury.edu, or agrosskopf@middlebury.edu with any questions!

We hope to see you at IHH 2023. Together we can change the Middlebury narrative around sexual violence as we strive to create an active community of care.