

On Loving and Hating MSU

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Michigan State University was the only university I applied to after graduating high school. While my classmates went back and forth between multiple institutions, I stopped wondering the moment I received my acceptance letter from MSU. There was nowhere else I wanted to go.

As a freshman in the fall of 2016, I fell in love with Michigan State—and I don't say that lightly. I was in the marching band and instantly had a group of friends I loved seeing every day. I loved walking to class through the trees and old buildings. I'd head home on the weekends of away games, but those trips always ended with me itching to be back on campus. There was nothing I loved more than being a Spartan.

But now that I've finished my third year at MSU, I sometimes feel like I came here at a really bad time.

There are small bothers, like the fact that literally everything I love is under construction. My walks to class are plagued by orange cones, jack-hammer noises, yellow bulldozers and skyscraper cranes. Of course, it's important to keep building and keep reaching for more; but I liked Adams Field better before it was fenced off for two years, and I doubt that we really need another towering apartment complex on Grand River.

Yet even skyscrapers are dwarfed by some of our other problems. Following the rapid-fire revelations of many of MSU's darkest secrets, it became impossible to ignore that campus has a problem with sexual assault and dealing with its aftermath.

It was January of my sophomore year that the news of Larry Nassar came to light. I remember just sitting there, in the basement of Snyder Hall, staring at my computer and

wondering what I was supposed to do next. I felt like all the love I had for MSU was invalid now. I didn't know how I could still love a university that had dealt with the most serious challenge in its history so incredibly poorly. It physically hurt to hear, to watch, and to be surrounded by.

But in the midst of all of this, I witnessed one of the biggest visible changes in a student body I've ever seen. The Izzone wore teal t-shirts to basketball games. Most students I saw walking to class had teal ribbons pinned to their backpacks. The Rock displayed the names of survivors for weeks, with a well-deserved "Thank You" written above them.

I know that teal ribbons and a painted rock won't fix everything wrong with the University, but for the first time in a long time, I'm able to remember why I fell in love with MSU in the first place. In between their anger and disgust, Spartans found a chance for unity—even if the administration didn't. I was sickened by the choices my school had made, but it was incredibly obvious I was not alone.

In the wake of the Brett Kavanaugh hearing last fall, I had a professor stop class and open the space for discussion on what was happening that day. She was visibly upset, transparently showing her emotions, and students began to follow her. An hour and fifty minutes that was supposed to be a lecture was instead filled with classmates sharing stories of their own survival and discussing what it really felt like to be an MSU student at this time.

This was the most important day of class I ever attended. We are too often expected to be neutral subjects coming to class, with no baggage and no thoughts other than what we need to learn that day. But this session was a discussion about what it was like to be a person, in this world right now, and what we can do to change it.

I'm not saying that the discussion was worth everything that happened in the past year. But I don't think this could have happened a couple years ago. That class was when I started to fall in love with the change Spartans have brought in the wake of our shame. The unity, the diversity of interest and thought, the different ways we all protest what is wrong—each is slowly making me feel like my passion for MSU might be warranted again. It's obvious to me now that MSU isn't just long walks through the beautiful campus and football Saturdays. The most important relationship I have with my school is figuring out how to love something and simultaneously being ashamed of it. I wrestled with this idea constantly for the past year and a half.

I still do.

Loving Michigan State University is a relationship that is constantly changing and evolving, and I'm learning more and more about how to do it along the way. Loving something that let me down so badly and still believing it can change is one of the most difficult things I have yet to do here.

I'm learning to love the revolution. I'm learning to love the change. And even though I'm here at a difficult time, I'm learning to love the opportunity to make a difference.