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You Were Never Really Here

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Abstract

This is a film review of *You Were Never Really Here* (2023), directed by Flor Portieri.

Keywords

Sexual Assault, Abuse, Mental Health

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Author Notes

Monica Blizek is a retired mental health professional.



You Were Never Really Here (2023), dir. Flor Portieri.

The sense of self often disappears after a sexual assault. There is a before self and an after self. The main character in this short film describes the beginning of her journey toward healing. The first part of any healing journey is to voice aloud what has occurred without expectations from the listener. There is no need for explanations, justifications, and what ifs. It is simply to tell the story out loud to another person and in this case the audience serves as her witness.

She tells us at the beginning, “I think there’s a fear I won’t be validated for my experience. I don’t think I need that from you.” She describes her sense of self as stronger when growing up in Buenos Aires. She wants to make films and her father tells her she should go to the US. She seems uneasy about how fast her first relationship in the US is going. There is a language barrier, and she is unable to express how she really feels. Unfortunately, she does understand “it’s your

fault” and believes it to be true. She states she doesn’t know why she stayed after he hit her. She doesn’t know why she let him back into her life, and she doesn’t know why she stayed over. None of these questions need answers right now. We see how her “self” disappears as the red marks on her thigh are removed. She recognizes how her memories of home are also disappearing.

At the end of the movie, she tells us again: “This is my first attempt at showing up for myself. I think there’s a fear I won’t be validated for my experience, I don’t think I need that from you.” Let the healing begin.

While this is a particular individual and a particular situation, it represents healing from trauma in general—all kinds of trauma. The film is an excellent example of someone telling their story and beginning the process of healing.