



News

Photo Galleries

Tuesday Top 10

Standing up and walking out

Hundreds of students leave class to support victims of sexual assault, protest school's handling of cases



Lexi Ramos

At 2 p.m. on Monday Nov. 15, hundreds of students walked out of their third-period classes in a show of support for students who have been victims of sexual abuse or sexual assault. The group met in the band parking lot and then marched around the perimeter of the school stopping often to hear personal stories of assault and survival. Each story elicited embraces and statements of support from members of the crowd. The walkout was about building community and improving systemic support on campus. "We shared ideas for a better support system at Mac while talking about the realities of the situation," said

Aubrey Mitchell, one of the organizers of today's walkout, "People cried, laughed, yelled, hugged and left feeling supported and empowered." Caption by Dave Winter.

Evie Barnard, Amaya Collier, Naomi Di-

Capua, Emma Hagood, Julia Husted, Eliza Jensen, Cassidy Levin, Lucy Marco, Helen Martin, Kaela Martin, Lexi Ramos, Elisha Scott, Lanie Sepehri, Alysa Spiro, Francie Wilhelm, Nate Williams, and Bo Witzel

December 7, 2021

"You are so loved!"

"It's not your fault!"

"We believe you!"

Amidst a crowd of hundreds of participating students, shouts like these could be heard in response to victims of sexual abuse and assault sharing their stories. After walking out of their classes at 2 p.m. on Nov. 15, participating students gathered together to show their solidarity with victims of sexual assault and dissatisfaction with how the school handles sexual assault cases. According to administrators, over 250 students attended the Nov. 15 walkout, each receiving an unexcused absence for the class they left.



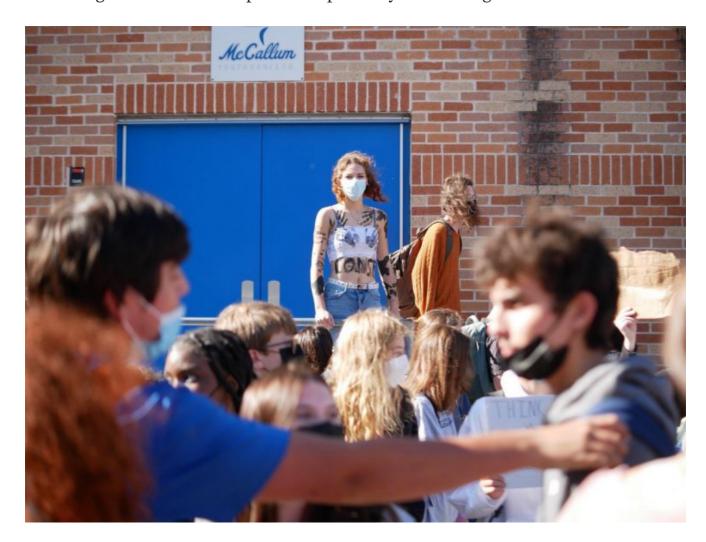
SIGNS OF THE TIMES: During lunch, freshman Aubrey Mitchell and Grace

Valdez work with a group of around 15 kids who met in the breezeway to make posters for the Nov. 15 walkout, which took place at the beginning of third period. Students brought paints and markers to school while others searched campus for potential materials to make signs. Mitchell's sign read "our halls should be safe." "Originally, it was a friend of mine who had brought a lot of cardboard and black paint," Valdez said. "We just started painting and coming up with ideas for messages." The posters conveyed a wide range of messages some expressing support for the victims of sexual assault, some critical of the school's handling of assault cases. "We wanted to make posters to help [promote] the idea of the walkout as a more organized thing," Valdez said. "The signs better conveyed our overall message." Caption by Naomi Di-Capua and Bo Witzel. Photo by Bo Witzel.



MAKING A STAND: On Monday Nov. 15 at 2 p.m., hundreds of students stood up and walked out of their classrooms, congregating outside the Mac Theatre before beginning a march around the school. Participants held handmade signs and chanted "No means no!" as they walked, along with other phrases supportive of victims. Aubrey Mitchell, one of the organizers of the Nov. 15 walkout, said that the event went as planned and that the size of the crowd, an estimated 250-350 students, was beyond their expectations. "Students started sharing their experiences around assault, and they exchanged feelings of sadness and anger. No

one felt alone and everyone felt safe. People who had never known another survivor got to meet 50." Caption and photo by Emma Hagood.



A SHOW OF SUPPORT: Aubrey Mitchell stands and looks out across the sea of students who walked out of their classes Monday Nov. 15 in support for sexual assault victims at McCallum. As the students gathered in front of the Mac Theatre, Mitchell addressed them, expressing her excitement and appreciation for the number of students who had shown up. Mitchell then led the crowd around the school stopping along the way to let their voices be heard. "From start to end I was on my toes. I could physically feel the anger and excitement coming from everyone," Mitchell said. "There's no more putting it off and no more time to ignore it. Things are moving forward and kids are finding their voices." Caption by Emma Hagood and Eliza Jensen. Photo by Emma Hagood.



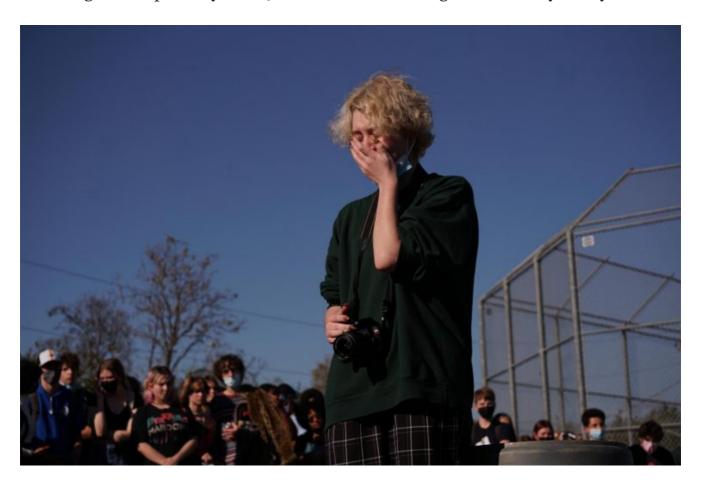


STRENGTH IN NUMBERS: Sophomore Hoovestol (middle, left) holds a sign reading "U R NOT ALONE" while wearing a T-shirt that reads, "We see you. We hear you." On Nov. 15, hundreds of students walked around the school in protest of sexual assault. "I think more general awareness is good," said Hoovestol, who asked to only be identified by their surname. "It also got parents talking. I think it demonstrates to the school just how determined and efficient the school body can be when united by issues like these." Caption and photo by Bo Witzel.



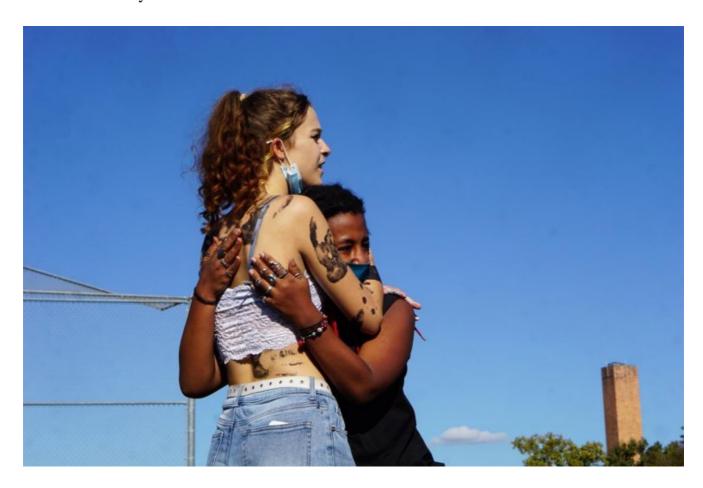


Freshman Aubrey Mitchell, an organizer for the walkout, brought together people from all over McCallum in order to speak out against sexual assault and to give them an opportunity to share their story. Prior to this picture being taken, Aubrey and her friend Grace smeared their hands with paint and scattered Aubrey's torso with handprints, an ode to sexual assault survivors as well as the addition of the word "consent" painted across her stomach. With the body painting, Aubrey attempted to make herself a visual representation of the reason every student walked out of class that day: to emphasize just how serious the issue of sexual assault is, and to protest the ways they feel McCallum has failed victims. "I felt heard, myself, and every story that was shared gave me a new perspective," Mitchell said. "This whole event gave people a new voice of confidence and that was the goal." Caption by Eliza Jensen and Emma Hagood. Photo by Amaya Collier.



Bo Witzel was one of the students who chose to share their experience with assault at the Nov. 15 walkout. "I found it extremely empowering," Witzel said. "I feel like

I've bottled up my story for so long. It was really hard feeling like I was carrying this burden no one knows about." For Witzel, feeling seen and heard by such a large crowd was an impactful experience. "It was incredible because I saw all these people who sat there and said 'We hear you' and 'We see you." Caption by Cassidy Levin. Photo by Elisha Scott.



Freshman Lucy Zanker and freshman Aubrey Mitchell embrace after Zanker spoke to the crowd. While listening to stories of other survivors, Zanker felt comforted that others could understand and empathize with their experiences. "It made me feel safer to know that there were people who had gone through other things that were like mine to a degree," Zanker said. Zanker didn't really know what to expect at the walkout but expressed their satisfaction with the event. "I didn't realize that there would be so many people," Zanker said. "I also didn't realize how hot it would be. I didn't have many expectations, but I was definitely pleasantly surprised." Caption by Alysa Spiro. Photo by Amaya Collier.





At 2 p.m. on Monday Nov. 15, hundreds of students walked out of their third-period classes to speak out about sexual violence at McCallum. According to junior Skye Ludlam, we need people in our community to "realize what a problem this really is. ... It really opened my eyes and shed light on the people in my life I need to stay away from," she said. Caption by Julia Husted. Photo by Elisha Scott.



While walking around the perimeter of the school during the Nov. 15 walkout, a student holds up a handmade sign. Many people came to the walkout with

homemade posters, reading things like "Actions should have consequences" and "I can't believe we have to do this." Some student made their signs at home before coming to school on the Monday of the walkout. Others made them in the breezeway during lunch just before the walkout. Caption by Helen Martin. Photo by Kaela Martin.



A crowd of over 250 students marches around the campus's perimeter during the Nov. 15 walkout against sexual assault. According to assistant principal Andy Baxa, students who walked out had to remain outside the building so as to not disrupt education for students who chose to remain in class. "We're never going to tell students they cannot protest," Baxa said. "But... if you interfere with other people's right to an education, that's kind of where we can draw the line." Baxa explains that the administration wanted to accommodate the choices made by different students. "Our main focus ... was just to make sure we preserve the sanctity of the educational environment and still allow people to have a place to do what they felt like they needed to do," Baxa said. Caption by Lanie Sepehri. Photo by Nate Williams.



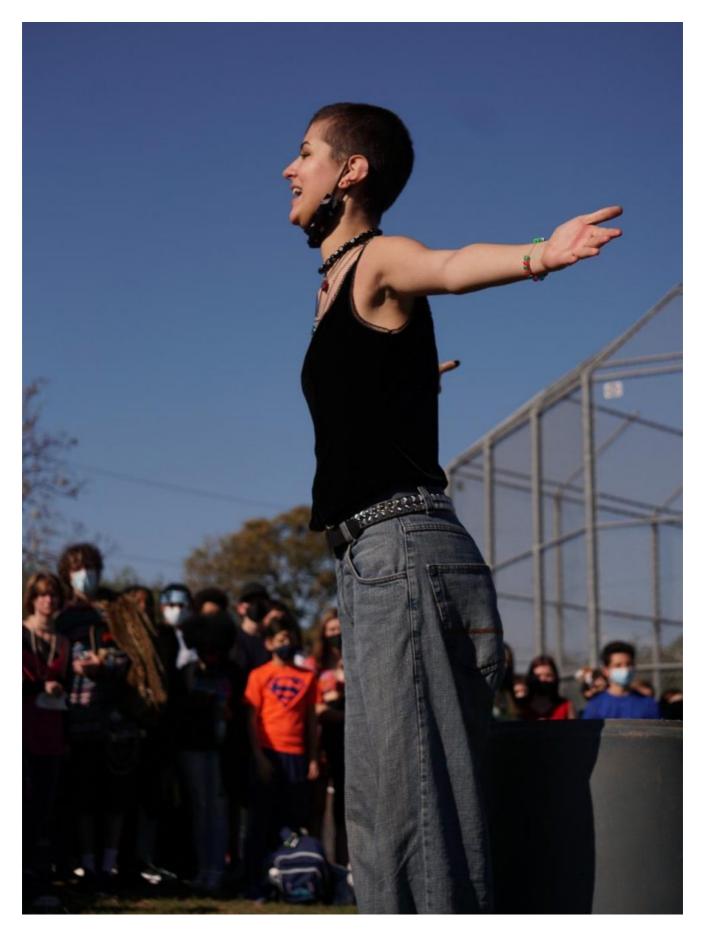
Marching with a homemade sign, sophomores Nya Hoovestol and Nick Carter attended yesterday's walkout to show their support to those in the Mac community who shared their stories and for all victims of sexual assault. "It felt amazing seeing all of the people there, showing their support to the victims and showing that something needs to be done," Carter said. Caption by Francie Wilhelm. Photo by Kaela Martin.



Sophomore Chloé Marco yells over the crowd as she shares her sexual assault story. "It was definitely stressful because I have never had that many eyes on me, especially when talking about something so personal," she said, "but it was also really empowering and the overwhelming support made it all worth it." Midway through her account, she was interrupted by counter-protesters, leading her to raise her voice to be heard. "It was like sharing it for the first time again," Marco said. "When I first came out about the assault, I was spoken over and called a liar and a bully. At that moment, I refused to stop for anyone else because I wasn't gonna be spoken over anymore." Caption by Lucy Marco. Photo by Amaya Collier.



Junior Georgia Zaninovich was one of the organizers of the Nov. 15 walkout. "This year, a lot of students have been open online about their experiences with sexual assault," Zaninovich said. She and other organizers disagree with the administration's handling of previous sexual-assault allegations. "We deserve to be listened to," she said. Caption by Cassidy Levin. Photo by Nate Williams.



Though junior Georgie Murray didn't originally plan to speak at the walkout, she explains that the supportive environment gave her the motivation she needed. "Everyone was there to listen to each other and lift each other up," Murray said. "It was honestly one of the most kind and accepting groups of people I've ever

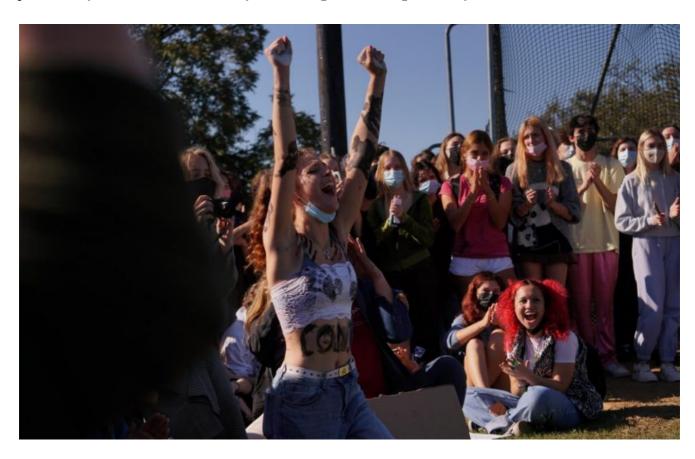
experienced here. I've never seen this side of the school before." Murray is hopeful that she and her peers' decision to walk out will cause lasting change in how McCallum views and approaches sexual assault. "I hope the walkout raised awareness," Murray said. "And I think that it has been helping because MASA — Mac Against Sexual Assault — was formed. Students have been causing a lot of uproar about sexual assault at AISD recently, so I know that there will be some stuff that comes out of it." Caption by Alysa Spiro. Photo by Elisha Scott.



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After marching around the perimeter of the school, students at yesterday's walkout regrouped by the baseball fields to share their stories of assault. Genevieve Henley was one of the students who decided to share. "It was my first time really sharing my story with anyone but close friends," Henley said, "It was a lot harder than I thought it was going to be." Afterwards, her friend Bri Wilson comforted her. "I was just really emotional," Henley said. Caption and photo by Evie Barnard.



Freshman Aubrey Mitchell throws her hands in the air and cheers along with the crowd for one of the many students who spoke at the walk-out on Nov. 15. Along with feeling pride for the students who shared their stories, Mitchell also expressed her gratitude to everyone who came out to support the movement. "The amount of support that was given after each story filled my heart," she said. "Everyone felt for each other. There was so much empathy in the crowd. They would cry with each other and yell out of anger." Emotions ran high as each person came up to share their story with a line of their peers behind them waiting to share their own. "I couldn't help but hug every one of them because the people who shared had a lot of courage," Mitchell said. "Sexual assault [has] never been easy to talk about. The survivors who shared finally let those bottled up emotions out and there was absolutely no judgment in the crowd." Photo and caption by Elisha Scott.

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