helpful as you consider ways of improving the justice system so that women don't feel frightened or ashamed of coming forward if they become aware of incidents of sexual assault in prison or experience the torture and humiliation of abuse themselves. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Ms. Ragsdale. We appreciate the obvious difficulty it is telling your story, but we appreciate your coming here today. Thank you.

MS. RAGSDALE: Thank you.


MS. BROWN: Good morning. My name is Necole Anderson Brown. I would first like to thank the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission for the opportunity to testify at this hearing. I hope that by sharing my very painful experience of being sexually abused in prison, I can assist the Commission in preventing this from happening to others. The correctional officer who did this to me has not been held responsible for what he did and so I'm here today to seek justice for myself.
and other women he has hurt.

I was initially incarcerated as Scott Correctional Facility in Michigan from 1996 until July 1998 on two counts of check fraud. There were over 1,000 women at Scotts at this time. When I entered prison, I was only 24 years of age and had no prior exposure to prison or any idea how things worked there, and I had no concept of what I was about to suffer through.

I was expected to be locked up for a couple years and then get out and go on with my life and be able to finish school. Derle Jones, one of the correctional officers at Scott, began expressing interest in me and being over friendly from the first day I arrived. At first he just made general conversation, but it quickly progressed to the point where he had other officers come get me from the housing unit and bring me to him wherever he was in the prison.

Soon conversations wasn't good enough. He began to sexually abused me in January of 1997. In the spring of 1997, he began taking me to storage
closets where he groped my breast and genital area,
digitally penetrated me and sometimes take off and keep my panties.

As the abuse became more severe, I found myself becoming withdrawn from everything around me. I was also extremely anxious because I never knew when Officer Jones would show up or when another officer would be there to take me to him. He touched and felt me in ways that disgusted me. No staff or administration personnel ever intervened, including when other male staff brought me to him or when he took me to areas where prisoners were not supposed to go. Before long, Officer Jones forced me to have sexual intercourse with him.

On one occasion, Officer Jones arranged for me to get a pass to the prisoner's health clinic on a weekend, although I had no medical need to be there. It was clear that he was planning to force me to have sex. Luckily, someone else was in the clinic. Officer Jones' plans were cancelled, and I went back to my unit.
While these actions usually took place outside of the direct view of inmates and correctional officers, it was well known around the prison that this was happening because Officer Jones involved other correctional officers in gaining access to me and made it obvious that he knew a lot of personal information about me that had nothing to do with his job.

To make sure that I went along with his misconduct, Officer Jones constantly threatened me, that if I told anybody, he would make sure that I would either be punished by being sent to administrative seg or that I would lose my privileges such as the phone, visits with my family and friends, and even that I would not be allowed to leave the prison. He made it clear that either I do what he requested or I would not go home. He had the ability to write me up for so-called misconducted any time he wanted. And the more tickets I got, the more good time I lost, meaning the release on parole would be delayed. I felt like I had to do the things that he asked me to do
so I could survive in prison and to be able to come home. When I was released from prison, from Scott Correctional Women's Facility in the summer of 1998, I initially was sent to a lower security correctional center for a short period of time. Officer Jones was aware of my transfer to this facility because he had access to my institutional record. He kept track of my schedule and places I was required to be at by speaking to the correctional officers who was working at the correctional center and they also reported my movement to him.

They never reported his improper calls or intervene on my behalf, rather they would call me to the phone and make me talk to him. I even had to clear my plans with him ahead of time over the phone because he wanted to make sure that he would be able to meet up with me when he was not working. Officer Jones accosted me outside the correctional center and at various locations that I had to report to, and on several occasions sexually assault me and force me to perform oral sex on him.
Every time he reminded me that he would make sure I was returned to prison immediately if I dared report the abuse.

One day when I was on pass from the center in order to take an employment test, Officer Jones confronted me in the bathroom at the Addeco employment building and forced himself on me. On another occasion, the center allotted me time to go shopping at a Wal-Mart store. During this trip, Officer Jones confronted me and insisted on walking me through the store. He then made me get in his car and he groped me and tried to force my head down to perform oral sex on him. Fortunately, a Wal-Mart security guard was driving around the parking lot. Officer Jones became nervous and dropped me off around the corner at the center. Although I had great freedom as a result of being at a correctional center, Officer Jones continued to abuse me and harass me, left me feeling violated, trapped, anxious and depressed.

After I had been released from the custody of the correctional center with an ankle bracelet or a
tether, Officer Jones continued to stalk me. He called and came to my mother's house where I was staying, and forced me to have sex with him by threatening to do something that would get me sent back to prison. I blame myself for what happened. Myself worth was extremely low. But I did not know how to escape him, and at the same time escape going back to prison. I was working very hard in putting my life back together, working two jobs and going to college, but I felt so helpful. At one point, I thought I was pregnant. When I raised this with him, he became enraged and said to the effect, I can't have any kids. I'll kill you if you tell anybody about this. Fortunately, the test came back negative. This incident made him finally leave me alone.

I ended up violating the terms of my inmate status by stopping at the store. The terms of my release required me to be at home, work or school, and I was returned to Scott Correctional Facility and in October 1999. I was then transferred to a newly opened women's facility, the Wayne
Correctional Center, for about three months. Unfortunately, Officer Jones had already been transferred there. He continued to threaten me about this report he had done.

One day he sent for me to come to the prison chapel where he was waiting for me. In the officer's presence, he asked me how my family was doing, addressing me in a very personal manner. Soon, everybody in the prison was aware of what this officer had been doing to me at Scott. I was terrified to make any waves. I was going to see the parole board soon and did not want to do anything to jeopardize my release. Shortly after his summons to the chapel area, other officers began harassing me, apparently in a show of solidarity with a fellow officer.

As I heard about other women in prison turn into lawyers, such as Deborah LaBelle, to get help with her sexual abuse by correctional officers, I finally decided to do the same thing. Once I spoke to her, she began to help me. However, the retaliation grew worse.
Correctional officers would interrupt my attorney visits, withhold my mail, search me or try to degrade me in front of other people for no reason. I was soon transferred back to Scott for my protection. My ordeal with Officer Jones finally came to an end in 2000, after five years. When I arrived at Scott, one of the correctional officers blurted out something like, "Why did they send you over to Western Wayne when they knew Officer Jones was there?" A lieutenant was present nudged him and snapped, "Don't talk to her."

Although I filed a formal grievance with the prison, it was denied supposedly for lack of evidence. This was sadly ironic to me given that both inmates and staff knew what Officer Jones had been doing to me for years.

Although my case was presented to the Wayne County prosecutor's office in 2001, Officer Jones has never been prosecuted. Instead, the prosecutor declined to pursue the case and denied the issue of a warrant for his arrest on October 4, 2001, citing insufficient evidence. This, despite the fact I
offered to take a polygraph test on numerous times and that I was able to describe in detail what the officer's personal vehicle and even his genitalia looked like. I knew personal things I never could have known if Officer Jones had not engaged in inappropriate conduct with me such as the time on weekends when his wife was out of town, the location of her beauty shop, where his wife worked at, and his telephone number. I also began logging everything inappropriate that Officer Jones and other correctional officers who were harassing me said or did.

Investigators interviewed me, but failed to follow up on information about my complaint. The Michigan Department of Corrections did not provide the evidence to the state police or the prosecutor, and the prosecutor did not bother to ask whether such evidence existed. A checkup on records would have revealed that Officer Jones insisted on calling me when I was released with an ankle bracelet, and a search of his vehicle would likely have produced incriminating evidence.
In addition, I later learned that three other women inmates had previously came forward and complained that Officer Jones had sexually assaulted them before I reported his abuse. Jones also tracked down and forced one of these women to have sex with him after she was released. Her mother took a photograph of him in uniform coming up to the front door of their house to find her daughter. My case was simply closed without looking into these other cases.

To my knowledge, neither Officer Jones or the officers who brought me to him in the prison and carried messages from him to me were interviewed about my allegations. State police contacted Officer Jones in 2001, but he told them it was a waste of his time to speak with them, and the police simply dropped the matter. Neither the police, nor the prosecutor, ever followed through to obtain an interview with him, nor sought the phone records or his duty logs, which would have corroborated my allegations. The prosecutor's office never interviewed other staff from the
prison or the women who complained to the prison of his abuse both before and after I told them of my abuse.

Since coming forward to report what has happened to me, I decided that I must stand up and fight. While I have struggled to move on with my life in the past years, I continue to contend with flashbacks of what this correctional officer did to me and the guilt, shame and rage, that comes with having been sexually violated for so many years. I felt lost for a very long time struggling with this, and I wasn't trusting of anyone. I still struggle with the memories of this ordeal and take it out on friends and family who are trying to be there for me now. This corrections officer and the correctional and prosecutorial system as a whole stole from me.

In addition to damaging my sense of self-worth, hope and dignity, I merely lost six months of good time as a result of unfounded misconduct this officer and others at his behest issued to me. I have had to seek therapy to work
through my emotions and my marriage counseling to stem the damage this ordeal has done to my relationship with my husband. I know that I didn't ask for any of this and I didn't deserve it and I still don't understand how this could happen to me or other women and how the Michigan authorities could have stood by and let it go unpunished until this day. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Ms. Brown.

To both of you, what type of reporting system do you think should be in place within the prison system that would make inmates feel comfortable about coming forward and reporting their ordeals?

MS. BROWN: Personally, myself, I feel that an outside liaison, confidential, regardless of the claim. I think it should be investigated privately. I don't think the officer should know about it until facts are shown. And then once facts are shown and it still be kept silent so that retaliation don't be brought against the woman. I feel that if they felt safe to talk to somebody on