

On July 2, 2008 I took an oath to join the US Navy as a Plebe on Induction Day. I said goodbye to my family and friends for the opportunity to attend the United States Naval Academy. I entered the Navy full of optimism. I truly believed the Naval Academy stood on higher ethical grounds than a civilian school. My family believed the USNA representatives that told us I would be safe--that there wasn't a sexual assault problem at USNA. We were all excited and proud of what I was going to be a part of.

Shortly after the academic year began I experienced two horrible and traumatic events. I was raped not only once, but twice--both times by fellow classmates. These events set the tone for my time at the Naval Academy. A time where I experienced a culture at the Academy that resembles a "boys only" club where men are considered superior to women--where women are frequently referred to as DUBs (Dumb Ugly Bitch) or other derogatory terms. Sadly, most women want to be accepted, say nothing and quickly adapt to the culture.

I tried to stay strong and pretend the events didn't happen or at least pretend they didn't affect me, but I could only lead on so long that I was OK. Upon seeking medical help from the USNA medical facility during my plebe year, I disclosed being raped when asked by the Naval Academy medical doctors, but they never inquired any further as to when and how my rapes had occurred. In 2011 I finally broke and my mental breakdown led to the sequence of events where my case was severely mishandled by USNA administration.

My mental breakdown happened in March 2011 just days before spring break, for which I was not permitted to leave the yard. I was told that because the USNA didn't have personnel to monitor or "baby-sit" me, I was sent under orders of the Commandant Robert Clark to Bethesda Medical where I was admitted to the psychiatric ward and diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). I contacted my father who came up the following day and convinced my company commander to have me released. I had to spend three days in a psych ward with men who had recently come back from combat.

After Spring Break I came back to the Academy in a fragile mental state, living in such close quarters to someone who had raped me was not something I could handle anymore. I requested to transfer to a different company, but was denied by my immediate Chain of Command (I requested to move companies multiple times after plebe year.) So this time, I called Mast with the Commandant Robert Clarke on the subject. He did not allow me to move companies either and told me to "grow up." None of the leadership ever dug into why I felt so strongly about moving companies and I was scared to tell them about the rapes. No one ever asked if something had happened to me. I thought if I could just get into a different environment, maybe I would be able to get through the remaining time. It wasn't until my Congressman Kenny Marchant stepped in and inquired about my situation that the USNA officials allowed me to move to a different company. I am grateful that Congressman Marchant took a stand for me and realized something was wrong based on his knowledge of me and my character.

Shortly thereafter it became clear that the Academy was going to try and use the diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder as a reason to kick me out. I decided to come out about the rapes at this point publicly because I felt my character was being attacked unfairly. I was a damaged person, but not because my personality and character was inherently flawed. I thought it would help the Academy officials to understand there was more to the story behind my breakdown. Unfortunately the fact I was a rape victim was largely ignored during my separation and merely was used as a side note. Somehow members of an Academic board were allowed to make judgments on me based on an inaccurate diagnosis.

On July 20, 2011, an Academic Review Board convened consisting of seven naval officers and one civilian academic dean. Other military officers were present as observers, but were not identified to me. During the hearing, my sensitive personal medical records were openly discussed by the panel without my consent and were ultimately used as a basis for my separation.

There were many discrepancies in the handling of my situation. For example, separation documents provided to me in advance of the hearing contained false and misleading information and was clearly written to present me in the worst light to the panel who in just days would determine my fate.

Also, these decisions about my health and mental condition were based on a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder that was made by a nurse practitioner and not a licensed medical doctor specialized in Psychiatry. After thorough evaluation by Veterans Affairs it has been verified I suffered from PTSD due to being raped. BPD was the convenient catch-all phrase used in my case to cover up my real condition, PTSD from being raped by upperclassmen as a plebe.

Moreover, during my Academic separation hearing, not a single board member had asked if I had consented to the release of my medical records and upon reading my written statement outlining my previous rapes, not one felt compelled to delay the hearing and call for an immediate investigation. The leadership had no issues allowing rapists to continue their time in the Navy while I needed to be rushed out. Instead of wondering why my performance and behavior took a turn for the worse, the administration turned their back on me and never took me seriously about the rapes. They didn't care about me.

The military found it easier to label me as having a personality disorder than to treat me for the trauma of being raped. In fact, according to the written transcript from my separation hearing, the military claims that: "there are no medications approved for treating this condition. And, as supported by her years of counseling, attempts to treat this condition through counseling are rarely successful and not available in the military."

As a rape survivor, I have a suggestion that there actually is an approved treatment—it's called investigate and prosecute. But it seems the motto of the U.S. Marine Corp of "leave no man behind" does not apply to the men and women who, when raped, are frequently and

intentionally left behind to deal with the pain, anguish and long term emotional stress.

Also to note, it's ironic that the Superintendent, Vice Admiral Miller, who recommended I be separated and questioned my character was later relieved of his command and demoted due to his involvement in the Fat Leonard scandal.

Based on my experiences, rather than providing more rape prevention training for the Midshipmen, I believe the USNA needs to train their faculty and leaders to identifying signs and symptoms of sexual assault. I sat through the Sexual Assault Prevention training required on campus and believe it was not taken seriously by the young men I served with. Often jokes of a sexual nature would happen in training sessions about Sexual Assault prevention.

My experience and the stories of others display the template for addressing rape victims in our military. When they begin exhibiting unusual emotional behavior, get them to medical where they can be diagnosed as having a personality disorder, which then is treated with antidepressants and anxiety medications. When that doesn't work, note how their behavior is affecting their life and the lives of their fellow midshipmen and up the dosages. When they are on the brink of suicide, from being prescribed huge dosages of mind altering medications, move to have them separated.

I was repeatedly encouraged to resign by USNA officials (wishing for me to just go away) but I chose not to because I had done nothing wrong and had no reason to resign. I was denied the opportunity of completing my education at the USNA. I was in a dark place and was unable to tell the board that I could commit to serving at that moment, but wished to pursue the opportunity to heal further by the time I would have graduated (1 year later) and then be evaluated for my ability to be commissioned. Instead, they determined that I was not fit to serve based on my "condition." I will never forget the day that I had to return my USNA class ring which represented the 3 years of hell that I had to endure.

The Navy continues to defend the ever-growing claims of military sexual assaults at the USNA as small and that those women who reported being raped were just mentally ill. How shameful! Military leaders then and now defend the growth rate as being good, claiming that they are glad to hear that women are coming forward to report their rapes. What they don't seem to get is that more rapes are bad and that they continue due to the failure by military leaders to address the root cause--that there is a small but active group of rapists whose crimes are rarely investigated let alone prosecuted and the military finds it easier to destroy the life of the victim.

The word is out! If you are a rapist, go into the military where you will be protected after you rape someone. I was processed out of the USNA while my rapists are now serving as officers potentially victimizing more people. Victims who see the treatment of those before them, such as myself, are not likely to come forward like I did, for they know what will be the consequences. Upon leaving the USNA, all forms of medical treatment and counseling ended. I was on my own to fend for myself. I was never contacted by anyone including my classmates, staff, faculty or even my coaches. I was and am shunned by the USNA. That is but a part of the

price I paid.