

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

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

11 MS. RAGSDALE: Thank you.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Ms. Brown.

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

1 and other women he has hurt.

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

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

20 Soon conversations wasn't good enough. He
21 began to sexually abused me in January of 1997. In
22 the spring of 1997, he began taking me to storage

1 closets where he groped my breast and genital area,
2 digitally penetrated me and sometimes take off and
3 keep my panties.

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5 myself becoming withdrawn from everything around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

16 On one occasion, Officer Jones arranged for me
17 to get a pass to the prisoner's health clinic on a
18 weekend, although I had no medical need to be
19 there. It was clear that he was planning to force
20 me to have sex. Luckily, someone else was in the
21 clinic. Officer Jones' plans were cancelled, and I
22 went back to my unit.

1 While these actions usually took place outside
2 of the direct view of inmates and correctional
3 officers, it was well known around the prison that
4 this was happening because Officer Jones involved
5 other correctional officers in gaining access to me
6 and made it obvious that he knew a lot of personal
7 information about me that had nothing to do with
8 his job.

9 To make sure that I went along with his
10 misconduct, Officer Jones constantly threatened me,
11 that if I told anybody, he would make sure that I
12 would either be punished by being sent to
13 administrative seg or that I would lose my
14 privileges such as the phone, visits with my family
15 and friends, and even that I would not be allowed
16 to leave the prison. He made it clear that either
17 I do what he requested or I would not go home. He
18 had the ability to write me up for so-called
19 misconducted any time he wanted. And the more
20 tickets I got, the more good time I lost, meaning
21 the release on parole would be delayed. I felt
22 like I had to do the things that he asked me to do

1 so I could survive in prison and to be able to come
2 home. When I was released from prison, from Scott
3 Correctional Women's Facility in the summer of
4 1998, I initially was sent to a lower security
5 correctional center for a short period of time.
6 Officer Jones was aware of my transfer to this
7 facility because he had access to my institutional
8 record. He kept track of my schedule and places I
9 was required to be at by speaking to the
10 correctional officers who was working at the
11 correctional center and they also reported my
12 movement to him.

13 They never reported his improper calls or
14 intervene on my behalf, rather they would call me
15 to the phone and make me talk to him. I even had
16 to clear my plans with him ahead of time over the
17 phone because he wanted to make sure that he would
18 be able to meet up with me when he was not working.
19 Officer Jones accosted me outside the correctional
20 center and at various locations that I had to
21 report to, and on several occasions sexually
22 assault me and force me to perform oral sex on him.

1 Every time he reminded me that he would make sure I
2 was returned to prison immediately if I dared
3 report the abuse.

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

21 After I had been released from the custody of
22 the correctional center with an ankle bracelet or a

1 tether, Officer Jones continued to stalk me. He
2 called and came to my mother's house where I was
3 staying, and forced me to have sex with him by
4 threatening to do something that would get me sent
5 back to prison. I blame myself for what happened.
6 Myself worth was extremely low. But I did not know
7 how to escape him, and at the same time escape
8 going back to prison. I was working very hard in
9 putting my life back together, working two jobs and
10 going to college, but I felt so helpless. At one
11 point, I thought I was pregnant. When I raised
12 this with him, he became enraged and said to the
13 effect, I can't have any kids. I'll kill you if
14 you tell anybody about this. Fortunately, the test
15 came back negative. This incident made him finally
16 leave me alone.

17 I ended up violating the terms of my inmate
18 status by stopping at the store. The terms of my
19 release required me to be at home, work or school,
20 and I was returned to Scott Correctional Facility
21 and in October 1999. I was then transferred to a
22 newly opened women's facility, the Wayne

1 Correctional Center, for about three months.
2 Unfortunately, Officer Jones had already been
3 transferred there. He continued to threaten me
4 about this report he had done.

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

17 As I heard about other women in prison turn
18 into lawyers, such as Deborah LaBelle, to get help
19 with her sexual abuse by correctional officers, I
20 finally decided to do the same thing. Once I spoke
21 to her, she began to help me. However, the
22 retaliation grew worse.

1 Correctional officers would interrupt my
2 attorney visits, withhold my mail, search me or try
3 to degrade me in front of other people for no
4 reason. I was soon transferred back to Scott for
5 my protection. My ordeal with Officer Jones
6 finally came to an end in 2000, after five years.
7 When I arrived at Scott, one of the correctional
8 officers blurted out something like, "Why did they
9 send you over to Western Wayne when they knew
10 Officer Jones was there?" A lieutenant was present
11 nudged him and snapped, "Don't talk to her."

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

17 Although my case was presented to the Wayne
18 County prosecutor's office in 2001, Officer Jones
19 has never been prosecuted. Instead, the prosecutor
20 declined to pursue the case and denied the issue of
21 a warrant for his arrest on October 4, 2001, citing
22 insufficient evidence. This, despite the fact I

1 offered to take a polygraph test on numerous times
2 and that I was able to describe in detail what the
3 officer's personal vehicle and even his genitalia
4 looked like. I knew personal things I never could
5 have known if Officer Jones had not engaged in
6 inappropriate conduct with me such as the time on
7 weekends when his wife was out of town, the
8 location of her beauty shop, where his wife worked
9 at, and his telephone number. I also began logging
10 everything inappropriate that Officer Jones and
11 other correctional officers who were harassing me
12 said or did.

13 Investigators interviewed me, but failed to
14 follow up on information about my complaint. The
15 Michigan Department of Corrections did not provide
16 the evidence to the state police or the prosecutor,
17 and the prosecutor did not bother to ask whether
18 such evidence existed. A checkup on records would
19 have revealed that Officer Jones insisted on
20 calling me when I was released with an ankle
21 bracelet, and a search of his vehicle would likely
22 have produced incriminating evidence.

1 In addition, I later learned that three other
2 women inmates had previously come forward and
3 complained that Officer Jones had sexually
4 assaulted them before I reported his abuse. Jones
5 also tracked down and forced one of these women to
6 have sex with him after she was released. Her
7 mother took a photograph of him in uniform coming
8 up to the front door of their house to find her
9 daughter. My case was simply closed without
10 looking into these other cases.

11 To my knowledge, neither Officer Jones or the
12 officers who brought me to him in the prison and
13 carried messages from him to me were interviewed
14 about my allegations. State police contacted
15 Officer Jones in 2001, but he told them it was a
16 waste of his time to speak with them, and the
17 police simply dropped the matter. Neither the
18 police, nor the prosecutor, ever followed through
19 to obtain an interview with him, nor sought the
20 phone records or his duty logs, which would have
21 corroborated my allegations. The prosecutor's
22 office never interviewed other staff from the

1 prison or the women who complained to the prison of
2 his abuse both before and after I told them of my
3 abuse.

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

18 In addition to damaging my sense of
19 self-worth, hope and dignity, I merely lost six
20 months of good time as a result of unfounded
21 misconduct this officer and others at his behest
22 issued to me. I have had to seek therapy to work

1 through my emotions and my marriage counseling to
2 stem the damage this ordeal has done to my
3 relationship with my husband. I know that I didn't
4 ask for any of this and I didn't deserve it and I
5 still don't understand how this could happen to me
6 or other women and how the Michigan authorities
7 could have stood by and let it go unpunished until
8 this day. Thank you.

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

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

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