

Subcommittee on The Constitution

May 20, 2015

It is an absolute privilege to be here today. Before I begin please allow me to take this opportunity to publicly thank Senator Cornyn for being a huge supporter of changing the issues that surround victims of sexual assault. His commitment to these issues speaks of his devotion to crime victims and their families. His wonderful staff has always made themselves available with pertinent information and help. Thank you, Senator Cornyn! Lifetime Television once described me as an “advocate by accident” and it is a true statement for I would have never walked purposefully into this place. But before I got here, there were already those, like NCVC, who were working diligently to pave the road for others. I am always humbled to sit at the table with Scott Berkowitz from RAINN, another one of those who purposely chose to find a way to make the path easier for sexual assault victims. Around this wonderful county of ours there are many more, too numerous to name, who fight this war on behalf of sexual assault victims and I am in awe of their commitment. As the years have passed we continue to have others, such as Joyful Heart, to join this continuing battle. As a victim of this horrific crime I am overwhelmed by the dedication of these professionals.

My personal experience as a rape victim provides me with the understanding of the devastation of this crime. With understanding

comes knowledge and with knowledge comes responsibility. This vivid understanding of knowledge and responsibility has changed my life forever.

I truly believed that March 3, 1989 would be the last day that I would feel the loving touch of my husband's embrace or hear the precious voices of my children say, "Mom, I love you." It was on that Friday afternoon that a stranger entered my home threatening to kill me if I screamed. He then abducted, blindfolded and led me to the woods behind my home where he robbed and repeatedly raped me.

The day I was raped was also the day this basket came into my life. This is Basket #6 and it has *never* held anything that gave it any real value ... nothing of monetary worth. It used to hold a pair of Reebok tennis shoes ... no big deal ... except it my first pair of brand name tennis shoes. There just never seemed to be enough money after buying the children's shoes. There was an Aigner purse and matching wallet emptied of its cash ... the purse and wallet combined were worth more than the shoes, but they still didn't carry an enormous price tag ... except they were a Christmas gift from my husband. He worked overtime so he could surprise me with the matching set. Basket #6 also held a pair of no name jeans ... no great expense there except ... they were my favorite as they fit just right in the waist and hips. There was also a sealed envelope containing public hairs, vials containing a cotton swab, and a pair of semen stained underwear ... definitely nothing of value. Stored in this ordinary wire basket, none of these

ordinary items were of any real value ... unless, of course, they belong to you.

After being raped I struggled with trying to live with the memories of that day. For 6½ years the smell of his breath, the touch of his cool, damp coat sleeve around my neck, the sight of his black rubber boots and the sound of his voice in my ears reminding me, “Remember I know where you live and I will come back to kill you if you tell anyone” were all stored in my mind unwilling to be discarded. I needed peace, security and to feel normal again. I had no hope that I would ever attain this vital relief. I had found the fate worse than death and it was living with the painful memory, living with the fear that he would fulfill his promise to return to kill me or even worse that he would he take out his revenge on my children or my husband. I merely existed for those 6½ years as fear held my heart and soul within its grip, choking out any joy of life. I became suicidal, seeking peace and rest from the pictures that played without warning in my mind.

Basket #6 has always been filled with what seemed like insignificant items, but it was this very Basket #6 that stored the rape evidence kit that would deliver peace to my heart and allow me to truly live life again. It held fragments of a life lived ... it held answers to my questions, solutions to my fears and peace for my soul. All of these resolutions were confined to this 11” x 12” ordinary wire basket sealed with red evidence tape.

On July 26, 1995 we received the news that a DNA cold hit had revealed the name of my rapist. He was already in prison for another crime. The torment was finally over ... I knew where he was! My family was safe! Basket #6 was finally allowed to speak!

Basket #6 now sits on my bookshelf alone. In my home, it still holds nothing of great value, but in my heart it holds the memory of a day gone terribly bad ... a day from which I thought I may never recover. Before it was brought to my home Basket #6 sat behind a locked door, lined up with many others on shelves in a darkened room doing exactly what it was fashioned to do ... sitting, holding, separating and waiting. Basket #6 has long been emptied of its original contents and now sits on that shelf in my office as a permanent reminder of the hundreds of thousands of other baskets, boxes and bags that still have the pieces of someone's life within them. It is for them that I speak today and it is for them that I will continue to do all I can to get these kits off the shelves of police evidence rooms and labs. It is for the victims represented by letters and news articles in this box and the two others like it at home that I keep me fighting for their right to justice.

Because someone cared those ordinary items stored in ordinary wire Basket #6 brought life to truth and that truth rendered justice! Because someone continues to report to work, Basket #6 has been emptied, a rapist has been identified, justice has been rendered, his future victims

have been spared, a survivor has found new joy, a family has been restored and a community united. Every victim represented by those baskets, boxes and bags with viable evidence deserves to have a voice. The day they allowed that evidence to be taken from their bodies they did all they were asked to do. They endured a four to six hour intrusive, humiliating exam that they may have an opportunity to receive justice. It is their right, we owe them this opportunity and it is simply the right thing to do.