

Survivors explain not reporting sexual assaults

By JOCELYN NOVECK
AP National Writer

NEW YORK — Shame. Guilt. Embarrassment. Denial. Disgust.

And fear — of losing a job, friends, colleagues, privacy, safety, even one’s life.

There are a myriad of reasons why survivors of sexual assault wait years to come forward — if at all. Indeed, about 7 out of 10 people who experience sexual assault never report it, according to Justice Department statistics.

So survivors responded with fury Friday to President Donald Trump’s remarks challenging the veracity of Christine Blasey Ford, the accuser of Judge Brett Kavanaugh. The president said she would surely have reported the assault to police “immediately” if the attack was “as bad as she says.”

On Twitter, the hashtag “WhyIDidn’tReport” was trending, with survivors coming forward with their own reasons.

“Because he was a member of our family,” one user wrote. “Because he threatened to kill me,” wrote another. “He was supposed to be my friend, but he beat me when I said no,” wrote yet another.

One of the most searing came from Ashley Judd, the actress who was an early Harvey Weinstein accuser.

“The first time it happened, I was 7,” she wrote. “I told the first adults I came upon. They said, ‘Oh, he’s a nice old man, that’s not what he meant.’ So when I was raped at 15, I only told my diary. When an adult read it, she accused me of having sex with an adult man.”

On Facebook, Kathy Gosnell, a retired newspaper copy editor in DeKalb, Illinois, was inspired by Ford’s revelation to finally share with a group of Facebook colleagues — a day before Trump’s tweet — that she had been drugged and raped, she said, by a colleague more than three decades earlier.

“It’s time to say something,” Gosnell, now 73, wrote on Facebook. “In the early 1980s, I was drugged, beaten and raped by one of our colleagues at the *L.A. Times*. ... Never again did I say his name or speak to him.”

In an interview, Gosnell said the man is now deceased and she still has no desire to say his name. He had invited her to dinner, she said, then gave her a drink, and that was the last she remembered until she woke up hours later in his bed, naked and bruised around her arms, chest and neck. She went home, “took seven or eight showers” and told no one until 15 months ago, when she told her daughter.

“I wanted to keep my job,” Gosnell said. “And I was afraid I would be ridiculed by colleagues, who might have said, ‘But he’s a great guy!’” (The newspaper did not immediately respond to an email asking for comment.)

Gosnell said she’s furious at the treatment of Ford, especially Trump’s tweet. “Of course I understand why she didn’t report. She must have known what would happen to her. And look what’s happening to her now.”

Scott Berkowitz, president of the anti-sexual violence organization RAINN, said reasons for not reporting assaults include fear of retaliation, fear of the perpetrator attacking again, social pressure from peer groups and simple shame.

“The president is misguided about standard behavior following a sexual assault,” Berkowitz said of Trump’s tweet.

There’s also, Berkowitz added, a guilt factor: “People are often blaming themselves, even though they are clearly not at fault.”

The same reasons are only exacerbated when victims are in their teens, he said, adding that 54 percent of those under 18 who call the National Sexual Assault Hotline say they have not told a single other person.

GOP, Kavanaugh accuser in standoff over her Senate testimony

By ALAN FRAM,
LISA MASCARO and
CATHERINE LUCEY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate Judiciary Committee chairman on Friday rejected concessions sought by Brett Kavanaugh’s accuser if she is to testify about her claim Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her when they were teenagers, and threatened a Monday vote by his panel on Kavanaugh’s Supreme Court nomination without a quick agreement.

Minutes before a 10 p.m. deadline set by Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, an attorney for Christine Blasey Ford requested another day to decide. Lawyer Debra Katz said the time limit’s “sole purpose is to bully Dr. Ford and deprive her of the ability to make a considered decision that has life-altering implications for her and her family.”

In a near-midnight tweet aimed at Ford, Grassley wrote that if she doesn’t wish to testify, “say so so we can move on I want to hear ur testimony.” That capped a tumultuous day President Donald Trump began with an incendiary tweet of his own, stating that if the long-ago incident was “as bad as she says,” she or “her loving parents” surely would have reported it to law enforcement.

The late-night brinkmanship between Grassley and Ford left in question whether she would appear before the GOP-run committee and describe her allegation to a captivated nation. Now a 53-year-old California psychology professor, Ford says an inebriated Kavanaugh pinned her on a bed, muffled her cries and tried removing her clothes when both were teenagers in the 1980s.

Grassley turned down Ford’s request that only senators, not attorneys, be allowed to ask questions. The committee’s 11 Republicans — all men — have been seeking an outside female attorney to interrogate Ford, mindful of the election-season impression that could be left by men trying to pick apart a woman’s assertion of a sexual attack.

He also rejected her proposal that she testify after Kavanaugh, a position lawyers consider advantageous because it gives them a chance to rebut accusations.



Jim Bourg/Pool Photo via AP, File

Supreme Court nominee Judge Brett Kavanaugh is surrounded by photographers as he stands with Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley R-Iowa, during his confirmation hearing on Capitol Hill.

“We are unwilling to accommodate your unreasonable demands,” Grassley said in a written statement.

Grassley’s stance underscored a desire by Trump and GOP leaders to usher the 53-year-old Kavanaugh onto the high court by the Oct. 1 start of its new session and before the November elections, when Democrats hope to grab congressional control.

Kavanaugh’s ascension to the Supreme Court seemed a sure bet until Ford emerged last weekend and provided details of the alleged assault. Kavanaugh, a District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals judge, has repeatedly denied the accusation.

Trump’s searing tweet reproaching Ford defied the Senate Republican strategy, and the advice of White House aides, of not disparaging her while firmly defending his nominee and the tight timetable for confirming him.

It brought blistering rejoinders from Democrats and a mix of silence and sighs of regret from his own party. Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, who hasn’t declared support for Kavanaugh, called the remark “appalling.”

It was also the latest provocation — from a man who’s faced a litany of sexual misconduct allegations himself — of moderate female voters whose support Republicans will need to fend off Democrats in the approaching midterm elections.

At a campaign rally in Missouri later Friday, Trump didn’t mention Ford but said Kavanaugh was born to be on the Supreme Court and “it’s going to happen.”

The Judiciary panel’s top Democrat expressed fury at Grassley’s negotiating position with Ford and maintained Democrats’ effort to build the battle into a larger election-year question about the treatment of women.

“Bullying a survivor of attempted rape in order to confirm a nominee — particularly at a time when she’s receiving death threats — is an extreme abuse of power,” said Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California.

Female interrogators “are sensitive to the particulars of Dr. Ford’s allegations” and would “generate the most insightful testimony and will help de-politicize the hearing,” said a letter Grass-

ley’s staff sent Ford’s lawyers. Kavanaugh, a District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals judge, has repeatedly denied the accusation.

Grassley said he’d schedule a hearing for Wednesday, not Thursday, as Ford prefers.

He also rebuffed other Ford requests, including calling additional witnesses. Ford wants an appearance by Mark Judge, a Kavanaugh friend who Ford asserts was at the high school party and in the bedroom where Kavanaugh’s assault occurred. Ford eventually escaped.

Grassley consented to other Ford demands, including that she be provided security and that Kavanaugh not be in the hearing room when she testifies.

Ford’s request for security comes after her lawyers said she has relocated her family due to death threats. She planned to meet with FBI agents in the San Francisco area to discuss those threats, said a person close to her who would describe her plans only anonymously.

The GOP letter to Ford’s lawyers said Kavanaugh and his family have received death threats too, “And they’re getting worse each day.”

Kavanaugh had seemed to gain momentum among Republican senators this week, with growing numbers saying it was approaching time to vote and those who’d voiced concern about Ford’s charges stopping short of expressing opposition to Kavanaugh. But with the slender 51-49 GOP majority and the unpredictability of how Ford and Kavanaugh would come across to millions of American voters should she agree to testify, his approval remains in question.

AP reporters Mary Clare Jalonick, Eric Tucker, Ken Thomas, Jill Colvin and Zeke Miller contributed.

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