

To: Chairman Chaffetz, Ranking Member Cummings and other distinguished members of the committee.

RE: Examining Misconduct and Mismanagement at the National Park Service

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the ongoing and pervasive environment of sexual harassment within the River District of Grand Canyon National Park (hereafter GRCA) and the mismanagement by Park Service supervisors. My life and National Park Service (hereafter NPS) career were drastically impaired by these events. I believe many lessons can be learned by what occurred at the Grand Canyon and the NPS has a long way to go before we can put this behind us.

I have worked for the NPS since 2004 and became a permanent, law enforcement ranger in the River District of GRCA in January 2013. With much excitement, I packed up all of my belongings and moved across the country to begin what I hoped would be a long-term position. I was looking forward to sharing the knowledge I had amassed over the prior 9 years in the fields of search and rescue, emergency services, law enforcement and general "rangering." I was also looking forward to learning a new set of skills, from the river district boatmen, presumably the best in the world at what they do. Had I known then what I know now about the river district, I would never have accepted the position. I would have been willing to forego a permanent career with the NPS rather than suffer for 2.5 years at the hands of NPS employees.

From February 2013 through May 2014, several of my male coworkers within the river district subjected me to ongoing discrimination, harassment, and disparate treatment based upon my sex. On my second time ever down the Colorado within GRCA, my immediate supervisor (identified as Supervisor 1 in the January 2016 DOI OIG report and hereafter Supervisor 1) and the River District Ranger (hereafter DR) sent me on a 3-person, 2-boat, 9 day trip. On this February-March 2013 trip, I was alone with two male river district employees - one of whom (identified as Boatman 1 in the OIG report) sexually harassed me and the other (identified as Boatman 3 in the OIG report) subjected me to such a sexually hostile work environment that I had nightmares about being alone with him on a boat. The DR was well aware of Boatman 3's attitude towards and treatment of me but Boatman 3 continued to torment me for 1.5 years. I reported the incidents of sexual harassment to the DR and to my knowledge, the only "disciplinary action" Boatman 1 received was an offer of a job in maintenance instead of the river district. Not until May 2014, after I filed my first EEO complaint, did I realize that Supervisor 1, the District Ranger, Deputy Chief Ranger, and Chief Ranger were all well aware of Boatman 1's history of sexually harassing women. Despite this knowledge, I was placed in an environment without cell service, access to a radio, and was completely cut off from the outside world with a known sexual harasser.

In May 2014, after almost 1.5 years of intolerable treatment within the River District, I filed my first EEO complaint. Upon hearing that I had filed a complaint, the Chief Ranger of GRCA (at the time) called me into a meeting with the DR, and the deputy Chief Ranger. In this meeting, I was met with anger that I was not letting the park deal with the issue "in house" and I was coerced to drop my complaint. After filing my formal complaint, I was forced by the deputy Chief Ranger into a highly stressful, hostile work environment in another work district in GRCA. As a result of the sexual harassment and ongoing hostile work environment, I suffered from depression, insomnia, lack of appetite, and despondency. At no time did any supervisor at GRCA or in the regional office demonstrate concern or empathy over what I was experiencing, nor did anyone ever assist me in improving the situation. I loved being a park ranger, being challenged by the myriad of situations one encountered on a routine basis. Whether I was hiking a backcountry trail, floating down a river, administering medical aid to a distressed visitor, or investigating a crime, I foresaw myself having a long career with the NPS as a ranger. Unfortunately, this was not to be.

In April of 2015, after nearly 2.5 years of constant, and at times, debilitating, stress, I resigned my law enforcement commission. I realized, after experiencing retaliation for simply asking the NPS to enforce its own policy of zero tolerance of sexual harassment, that this agency does not stand behind its employees, and especially not its female employees. This can be a very disconcerting feeling when you put your life on the line everyday as a law enforcement ranger. No longer did I wish to gamble with my life for an agency that did not support me. So I resigned my commission, but still hoped to continue my career with the NPS. Despite everything I have experienced, I truly believe in the mission of the NPS and feel honored to work in some of America's best places.

When I resigned my commission, the Deputy Chief Ranger immediately offered me the opportunity to be placed in a temporary detail that would help me gain new skills in another chosen career path within the NPS. For the next two months, I had to fight the Deputy Chief Ranger, Deputy Superintendent Diane Chalfant, and Superintendent Dave Uberuaga to be placed in this detail that I was promised. Ms. Chalfant, during a phone call in April 2015, stated that they could not simply "create a job for me" even though I was asking to be detailed into a division that had an open job announcement. During this time, I woke up everyday not knowing if I had a job or if the NPS would evict me from my government owned park housing. Requests to transfer my housing agreement to my fiancé, another Grand Canyon employee, were denied by the Superintendent's office. Ms. Chalfant shared my personal information and declaration to Secretary Jewell with those same perpetrators I had named. My professional reputation was tarnished and my peers referred to me as a "bull in a china shop." I suffered from so much stress that I was placed on doctor-approved sick leave. Finally, after I could no longer take the continued retaliation and stress, I left my career and Grand Canyon in August 2015.

Since the publication of the OIG report in January 2016 and the subsequent media attention, the NPS has declared (again) that there is zero tolerance for sexual harassment and discrimination. They have shown their rededication to the existing policy in several ways, including increased sexual harassment trainings for all employees, first banning alcohol on all Grand Canyon river trips, and then abolishing the river district in its entirety. The right reaction (and the one that would have been immediate within the private sector) would be to hold those guilty River District boatmen and the supervisors at GRCA accountable. After all, disciplinary action was swift and severe for the two women who allegedly danced lewdly and waved a penis straw on that infamous night on the river. Yet somehow, the NPS has found it extremely difficult to apply disciplinary action upon anyone else involved in Grand Canyon's culture of mistreating women. To the best of my knowledge, here is where those involved in the events are now:

1. Boatman 3: reported to have been terminated as of August 2016.
2. Supervisor 1: retired in May 2015
3. River DR: Acting Chief Ranger of another park, reported to soon be employed as a Special Agent within the Investigative Service Branch (ISB).
4. Deputy Chief Ranger: still in same position
5. Chief Ranger: Promoted to Superintendent of another park
6. Deputy Superintendent Diane Chalfant: Still in current position at GRCA but said to be promoted in the near future to Superintendent of a park in Montana.
7. Superintendent Dave Uberuaga: was offered the option of a position in DC or allowed to retire. Elected retirement. He himself said this was not disciplinary action.

As one of the woman who submitted a declaration to Secretary Jewell in the hope that change would be implemented within the NPS, I am disappointed in the agencies continued lack of holding its employees accountable for their actions. I believe the agency finally responded to what they knew was ongoing for 15 years because of the scrutiny imposed by both the media and this Congressional Committee. I have yet to see real cultural change within the NPS. Sexual harassers will continue their behavior knowing full well that they will never suffer professional repercussions for it. The NPS has a history of promoting out or up many of its "problem" employees. Employees, male and female, are still afraid to speak out about injustices or wrongdoings they encounter. Many NPS staff feel routinely undervalued by their supervisors, resulting in dismally low employee satisfaction ratings in surveys. The Grand Canyon sexual harassment scandal was only the tip of the iceberg. I sincerely hope that this Committee can encourage the NPS to continue down the path of absolutely necessary cultural change.


Rachel Brady

