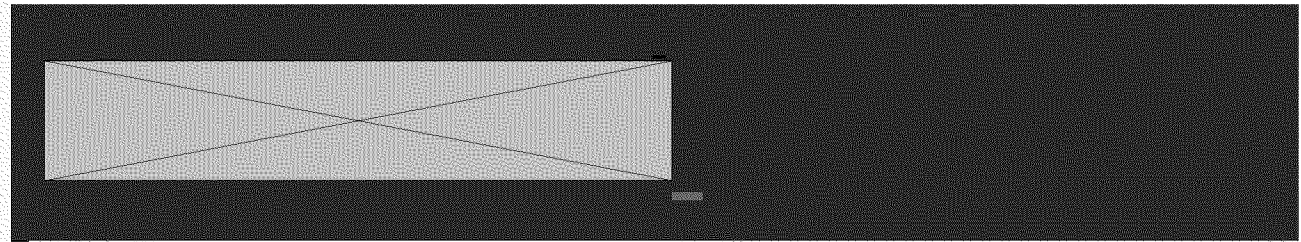


To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: The Washington Post
Sent: Fri 10/27/2017 4:01:46 PM
Subject: Federal Insider: Stories of Uncle Sam's pervasive culture of sexual misconduct



Stories of Uncle Sam's pervasive culture of sexual misconduct

By Joe Davidson

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Denice Rice, a Forest Service employee, who says she suffered retaliation after complaining about a supervisor who "poked my breast." (Photo courtesy of Denice Rice)

At the end of my last column, covering a House committee report on sexual misconduct in the federal government, I asked readers about their experiences and their views on how pervasive that misconduct is.

It was not a scientific survey, but based on the responses, it is safe to say that Uncle Sam has not escaped the poisonous culture of assumed male privilege over female bodies that is pervasive generally.

The previous column covered a House Oversight and Government Reform Committee report about the government's inconsistent disciplinary practices and poor record keeping on sexual misconduct. That document cited:

- Environmental Protection Agency's "lack of action to strengthen internal guidance for disciplining sexual misconduct," which the report called

“stunning.”

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- National Park Service’s “history of sexual harassment and misconduct within its ranks.”
- Forest Service’s “hostile and discriminatory work environment for women ... as well as a history of sexual harassment and misconduct that often went unaddressed.”

Email replies to my questions came from employees of various agencies, but the Forest Service more than any other, perhaps because it was shamed at a House Oversight Committee hearing I covered in December. Then, Denice Rice, an employee of California’s Eldorado National Forest, told about how a male supervisor held a letter opener and “poked my breast, both breasts, with a smile on his face in an arrogant way, like he could get away with it.”

Almost a year after the hearing and “months of pure hell,” things are no better for Rice, who said she lost her supervisory duties after reporting the harassment.

“The agency protected him. ... I was removed of my supervisor duties. Moved away from my peers. ... Completely ostracized,” she said Thursday. “I’m still fighting for my supervisor position back.”

Asked about the federal government’s policy on sexual misconduct, the Office of Personnel Management punted to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which also provided no answer.

Among the readers’ responses was one from a government lawyer working overseas. He did not want his or his organization’s name used, because he fears retaliation. He was exonerated of sexual misconduct, but it came at a painful price.

Federal agencies “have a bunch of slipshod rules enforced by poorly trained staff,” he said. “The result is that the rights of the accused are often brushed aside on the altar of sexual harassment enforcement. ... For African-American men, the system is particularly biased as accusers are able to play on the institutional racism that is inclined to see black men as either criminals or sexual predators. ... The accused has no rights.”

Certainly, accusations too often pass for facts. But his experience is not that of women like Rice, who say they were punished after reporting sexual

Sexual harassment is completely unacceptable in any workplace. ...” she said. “This is a pervasive problem across our country. This must stop. It is not the worst. Here are a few others:

Uniform Watch, the fire station was so rugged while working as a National Park Service firefighter in Central California. “More and more I was getting Reckless intoxicated with encouragement from crew mates and supervisors to partake. I was eventually the victim of two sexual assaults. ... I had Udele Sand is a slacker in policing sexual misconduct in agencies] drugged in some way that night because I passed out very quickly that Forest Service clamped the door in front of the sanctuary and racially rights and parents] had been raped but was too out of sorts and embarrassed to drive to the nearest town and report it.”

Zindia Dalton worked for the Forest Service in California Service Texas. Her email said her boss forced “me to tell him when I started my menstrual Watch over finds the system weakness asking responses to sexual harassment in the workplace DOJ” throwing the ball on the DOJ” me to find. My coworker physically jumps on my neck ride me like a horse while I cry and beg for him to stop while other crew members watched and laughed. Having my boss ... put me in a choke hold and trying to rape me as I beg for him to stop and now [he] has been promoted ... while I’m not allowed to work! And so much more I can go on and on!”

- Cheryl Raines spent 25 years fighting fires in the Cleveland Nation Forest in California and recalled an engine captain “who tried everything to get me to sleep with him for a few years and when he became my supervisor he made things miserable, including holding back training, fire assignments and eventually promotions. ... After 2 years of hell of trying to go through the process and resolution, the harasser still has his job and life goes for him with no type of punishment, this sends a message that they can get away with it and keep their jobs.”

Better training often is suggested to combat harassment. Rep. Brenda Lawrence (D-Mich.) introduced legislation Thursday that would require congressional staff to take anti-harassment training as she said executive branch employees do.

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