



PEACE CORPS HEARING AFFIDAVITS

We have received dozens of affidavits in the weeks since we first asked Peace Corps Volunteers to share their stories earlier this Spring. The affidavits, from women whose service has spanned four decades and touched every part of the world, illustrate five basic themes:

1. Peace Corps Country Posts Are Not Appropriately Training Volunteers On Issues Of Sexual Violence.

“During our two month training period, we had a session on . . . sexual assault, and the message . . . seemed to be that if we got raped, everyone in our Guyanese communities would think it was our fault, including the Peace Corps Guyana staff.” (2008-2010 Peace Corps Volunteer)

“I remember a one hour session during my in-country training where we watched the Serving Safely video. I remember that it was extremely outdated and that the women were very apologetic about their experiences. I remember the take-always being ‘don’t drink’ and ‘don’t run in site.’” (2006-2007 Peace Corps Volunteer)

“Training on this issue was very limited The tone . . . [suggested:] if the PCV follows the[] guidelines – not drinking, not staying out late, etc. – [she] will be safe.” (2006-2007 Peace Corps Volunteer)

2. Volunteers’ Reports Of Harassment And Threats Are Often Not Taken Seriously Upon Report.

“When I called my APCD to report [that I was being taunted and threatened with rape,] she . . . told me to come into the office in a month When I went in a month . . . , she blamed it on me . . . I must have done something to make [my harassers’] behavior change.” (Currently Serving Peace Corps Volunteer)

“I went back to the Peace Corps’ office that weekend and reported [I] fe[lt] unsafe and threatened by my host father. Again, I was not taken seriously I was told that moving to a new host family was not an option. . . . A few weeks later, after more threats of an impending kidnapping and a few more trips to the PC office to request being moved My host father came into my room in the middle of the night and raped me.” (2005 Peace Corps Volunteer)

“[M]y Program Director . . . raped me . . . Not only did the Peace Corps allow the Program Director to remain in his position supervising Volunteers, even after I reported the rape, but before the Peace Corps would honor my request to be supervised by someone other than [my rapist], I was forced to confront him, face-to-face, in front of the Peace Corps Medical Director.” (1984 -1985 Peace Corps Volunteer)

3. The Peace Corps’ In-Country Response Often Fails to Meet Survivors’ Needs.

A. The Need for Psychological Care



The Peace Corps . . . allowed me to get in contact with a psychologist . . . in the DC office . . . [who] said, ‘well I guess we learned our lesson, didn’t we?’” (Currently Serving Peace Corps Volunteer)

“The Peace Corps did not ensure that I was. . . stable psychological[ly] . . . before submitting me to an interrogation in which I was made to feel like the perpetrator.” (Currently Serving Peace Corps Volunteer)

“[Seeing the in-country counselor] ended up being more detrimental than helpful to me, as the therapy included her telling me ‘people have to experience things like this so we can understand life.’” (2008-2010 Peace Corps Volunteer)

B. The Need for Staff Support

“[I]t was 2 weeks before I heard anything from Peace Corps [after having reported the rape to the Safety and Security Officer]. . . . The Peace Corps . . . call[ed] me 2 weeks after I reported it. . . . A week after that, they called me saying that I would be put on probation and a behavioral contract. They were very clear [that] it was my actions that warranted this assault.” (Currently Serving Peace Corps Volunteer)

“During my reassignment and after, my APCD repeatedly made comments about how I should have taken my safety into my own hands by dressing more conservatively . . . I had not dressed inappropriately in any instance.” (Currently Serving Peace Corps Volunteer)

C. The Need for Legal Action

“The Peace Corps seemed to defend or dismiss my attacker because admitting his crime would be a liability.” (Currently Serving Peace Corps Volunteer)

“[A]n in-house rape kit was performed by the PCMO. The rape kit was later found to be inadmissible in court . . . because [Peace Corps] had broken the chain of evidence. . . . At one point I was told that [Peace Corps] w[as]n’t sure . . . it was worth continuing to pay for a lawyer if our chances of winning were slim.” (Currently Serving Peace Corps Volunteer)

“I spoke to the American in-country PC director about my case. I said I wanted to prosecute and he said ‘It’s your word against his. He said you wanted to have sex and we believe him.’” (1991 Peace Corps Volunteer)

E. The Need for Confidentiality

“[I] refused to label it a sexual assault after I was shown the flow chart of who had to be contacted . . . following a sexual assault. There were no fewer than 15 people on that list, many of whom I had no confidence in . . . I wish the Peace Corps had . . . a process for volunteers, like myself, who felt like they could not label their incident ‘sexual assault’ because they did not trust the administrators within their country of service.” (2004-2006 Peace Corps Volunteer)



4. Upon Return to the United States, Survivors Often Receive Hostile, Rather than Supportive, Treatment.

“[The Peace Corps’ counselor] made me write down everything I had done wrong and would do differently when I went back to Bangladesh. As examples to ‘help’ me get started, she suggested I write down: that I had gone out alone after 5:00 PM, that I didn’t scream or fight back, and that I had failed to integrate into the community. Rather than feeling safe and supported, I felt belittled and blamed.” (2004-2005 Peace Corps Volunteer)

“I was sent to a male gynecologist for an exam. I was not asked if I was okay with a male (I would have said no) . . . I recall finding the pelvic exam incredibly painful . . . and him telling me to stop being hysterical and just calm down.” (1991 Peace Corps Volunteer)

5. Institutional Obstacles Often Prevent Survivors From Receiving Long-Term Medical and Mental Health Care.

“In between letters there were dozens of phone calls to clarify what forms and signatures OWCP required. . . . My case moved to three different people at OWCP during this process. Each time my case moved, I had to explain my claim, the details of my assault, and my treatment. . . . This entire process took 9 months to finish and I had spent thousands in out-of-pocket expenses.” (2007-2008 Peace Corps Volunteer)

“I called DOL numerous times and each time, I spoke with a different person who gave me different directions. I was doing this all myself and, in the state I was in, I could not do it alone. Nothing about the process made sense. I lived in a rural town in Montana and I could not find a doctor DOL would approve. Eventually, I gave up trying to get my sessions covered and ended up paying over \$1500 in therapy out of pocket. Because of the financial burden, I stopped therapy altogether. It was just too hard and nobody seemed to be taking my situation seriously.” (2006-2007 Peace Corps Volunteer)

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All of the PCVs from whom we have received affidavits care deeply about the Peace Corps, and none want the challenges they faced to detract from the Peace Corps’ vital mission. To make the Peace Corps more effective in the 21st Century, however, fundamental change is required in how issues of sexual assault and violence are handled. We look forward to working with you and the Peace Corps to effect that change.