

June 8, 2006

Hello!

At the beginning of May, I became the victim of date rape. After seeing your website, I went to Howard University to do a rape kit exam. When I got there, they told me I had to give the guy's name and make a formal police report to press charges. I asked the cop and the nurses what "pressing charges" entailed because I have no experience with the legal system. Before cooperating with the authorities and potentially committing myself to a long, painful legal process, I wanted to know what I was getting into.

Nobody knew. I was given evasive, vague answers and belittled by a nurse who said she was "disappointed in me" because I'd come in and then expressed reservations about moving forward with the process. I told her I was not yet sure whether or not I wanted to begin the legal process but I knew that it was vital to have the kit performed before too much time was lost in order to keep legal options open. I was hoping I could have the exam and later, when I was thinking more clearly, make informed legal decisions. I was in no shape to make important decisions at that point.

Instead of offering me any kind of information, the cop and nurse both told me: "Nobody asked you to come in here. You came here on your own and now you aren't cooperating. We're disappointed in you."

I was ready to just leave when the nurses decided to call a victim's advocate from your center. Her name was Salem and she did an awesome job. She totally understood that I hadn't exactly "chosen" to be in the emergency room at 2:00 a.m. and that I was basically scared and confused by the whole intimidating, bureaucratic process. Unlike the nurse and cop, she listened to me and told me that my fear and confusion were normal. I had done the right thing by coming in and she understood that, especially in date rape cases where you know the person who did this to you (and may have even been in love with them), it is often difficult to press charges against them, no matter how convinced you are that what they did was wrong.

She listened and gave me as much information as she could. She got me into a taxi. I never did the kit but later did end up speaking to a lawyer about it, to gather more information. I decided not to take legal action but did end up dealing with the rapist in my own way -- by talking to him myself and explaining what he'd done. Now he will never contact me again and I can begin dealing with this situation with counseling at the center.

Whatever training Salem got, she definitely used. I was utterly impressed by her good attitude, sincerity, and sensitivity. What an amazing person. Please let her know that she really helped me that night and that I still remember many of the things she said to me. I remember them when I'm feeling down.

Thanks so much for offering this service and for sending people like Salem out into hospitals in the middle of the night to talk to people like me. It's awesome.

Salem, you were  
the best! Thank you  
for everything!  
I'll never forget  
you! Love,  
[Signature]