

Being a Sexual Assault Victim During Covid-19

By: Elaina Cooke

To be able to express the personal effects of this pandemic publicly is intimidating. I have not gotten Covid-19, but I continue to be in the line of its destruction. This pandemic has not affected me physically with its viral symptoms, but it has indeed affected me physically, mentally and emotionally. I could selfishly go into detail about how difficult it has been since the pandemic began although not being infected, but in our world today, between elections, racial injustice, and a pandemic, I believe anyone that says they have not been negatively impacted by the chaos of 2020 would be telling a blatant lie.

My struggles through this year do not involve high fever, chills, fatigue, loss of taste and smell, or death. Covid-19 directly affected me through my University and the state's Justice system. I became a victim of Sexual Assault on my campus in 2019 and I reported my assault towards the beginning of the pandemic. Due to the jurisdiction I had to report through the University. Covid-19 had caused many institutions to enforce restrictions and terminate employees. Because of this I was running in circles to get my assaulter in custody.

The department at the University who had been dealing with my case had to face the same struggles I had to. We had to work even harder to get in contact with anyone. There were also restrictions enforced about physical contact, with good reason. Meaning I could not get therapy, I could not go in to get medicated for my trauma and I could not travel to see my parents during this horribl experience. All these things made my healing very difficult and almost impossible.

My case was delayed so much that as the process went on I was being doubted and questioned about my assault because of how long it would take to get to the next person of authority. Not only did I have to deal with the struggles of being a sexual assault victim in an already-flawed system that did not protect women, but I had to abide by the new quarantine rules. My assaulter was not questioned until 8 motnths after I had reported my case and when he was questioned he refused to comment. My case was rejected by the state attorney without them having met with me and I was left alone in my dorm room on quarantine enforcements. I had to experience this alone, scared, confused, victimized and unprotected.

As elections approach, the Covid-19 restrictions are beginning to lift and I cannot help to believe that my case could have been handled differently had the pandemic never occurred. I am at a crossroads of resenting the justice system or resenting the deadly virus.

I, along with others, will be affected by this pandemic for the rest of my life, whether it be from being infected with Covid-19 or the effects of being in isolation for almost a year while life still wanted to teach us lessons. 2020 was not centered around Covid, that would have been impossible. Society had to carry on, bad and good things had to happen just as it would during any other year. We still needed to have a functional government, maintain businesses and proceed to be functioning peoples in society. People forget that the clock does not stop when a pandemic hits, time gets harder.