



# Sisterhood Against Sexual Assault



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*Her Fight is Our Fight!*

I am writing to you to tell you my story for two reasons, first and foremost, to bring awareness to the dangers of not always taking precautions when you are anywhere away from home. I also want to recognize an amazing group of women who, not only worked miracles in 7 days, but have also founded an incredible organization to support future victims/survivors, Sisterhood Against Sexual Assault.

On December 31st, 2022, I flew with a friend to Punta Cana, Dominican Republic for a week at an all-inclusive resort. We arrived at the resort around 5 PM and enjoyed dinner and the New Year's Eve band. On Sunday, January 1st we had breakfast and basically hung out at the pool and met a couple from the D.R. and just enjoyed the sunshine and the beautiful scenery. After dinner, my friend decided they

just wanted to go up to the room. They had had enough for the day, and I stayed down and listened to music and enjoyed the entertainment they had at the resort.

Monday, January 2, we again had breakfast and walked the beach a little bit then headed back to the pool where I participated in water Zumba and took Salsa lessons poolside, all in the same area...just enjoying being in the sunshine and the friendly people. After dinner, my friend stated that they had a headache and just wanted to go to the room again...I had been really excited about the theme night that night as it was the 20's theme and I had brought the perfect dress for it, so I stayed down again and sat watching the dancers, impressed with their crazy talent.

Next thing I remember was landing from being

pushed out of a car...I remember this mostly because my knees hurt and sort of shocked me to life...next I was being shaken by emergency personnel in an alley of the resort and was literally lying in a large pool of my own blood. I was streaming blood like a faucet from my vagina. I was in and out of consciousness in the ambulance and truly don't remember much at until I was in stirrups on an operating table with a man telling me that I needed to calm down and stop screaming and watch how I talked to them. Blood was just gushing out of me, and they told me that somehow I had a gash 10 cm long inside my vagina, from either metal or glass and they needed to do emergency surgery or I was going to die. They gave me a spinal block because I could not handle the pain and the surgeon stated that she had sewn a 4-inch incision inside of me to stop the bleeding. The paperwork stated that I had lost at least 500 cc's of blood on the operating table alone and they stated probably over 1000 cc's prior to arrival. They began transfusions immediately following the surgery.

I was then told that I had been brutally raped with either a knife or some metal or glass object which was used to slice inside of my vagina and that when they found me, I was barely hanging on to life. I was told to call my children and let them know what was going on and to give them any instructions as to what to do in case of death (life insurance, 401K info etc), that was the hardest thing that I have ever done. The next 24 hours were more of the nightmare...no one spoke English, no one wanted to help, I was nauseous and was told to just turn my head and throw up on my sheets, which they then folded over and never changed. I lied in blood-soaked sheets for the entire time that I was there and went through 3 more transfusions.

***"I was being shaken by emergency personnel in an alley of the resort and was literally lying in a large pool of my own blood."***

The doctor came in in the afternoon of January 3rd and told me that I needed at least 2 more transfusions but that my bill was already \$8,000 and I would need to pay that before I was allowed to leave the hospital. I informed them that as a single mom I don't have that kind of money just laying around and could not pay that at all. The office administrator then came in with security and stated that if I did not pay the amount due, I would be arrested and held until it was paid. I made calls to family members and borrowed from them and drained my son's college funds so that I could just get home. The doctor then came back and told me that my kidneys were shutting down and he wasn't sure that I would make the trip back to the states. He said that it was more likely that my kidneys would shut down before I arrived back to the USA. He stated that every test and every transfusion would be another \$1,000 but it was necessary for me to live. I did not have that and stated that I would take my chances and go home. He stated that his ethical duty was complete when he saved my life, as I was very near death when I arrived. I left after signing that I was leaving against doctor's advisement.

Flight plans were changed for me to leave Wednesday morning instead of Saturday so that I could get back to the USA and to the hospital

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here. In the meantime, my girlfriend back home had contacted the Embassy in the D.R. and told them about my horrific ordeal. I heard from the Embassy first on my shuttle from the resort to the airport and then at the airport about an hour from boarding the plane. In the second conversation I was told that if I wanted to file any criminal charges that I would need to go to the Magistrate's Office of Gender Crimes and that would need to be done prior to me leaving the country. The Embassy stated that there had been a recent history of bartenders drugging single tourist's drinks and recently they were taken off grounds so that the resort was not responsible. I was not willing to risk my life to stay and find them and meet with them and simply wanted to get back to my country.

My girlfriend had called the hospital (Atrium Pineville) to alert them that I was coming and let them know about my situation.

By the time that I arrived at the airport in the D.R. I couldn't walk, my legs were swollen about three times their size and I could not straighten them out. I was in a wheelchair the entire trip home. The words from the doctor kept repeating in my head that my kidneys were shutting down and I may not make it home.

After arriving at the hospital, they acted fast and began more transfusions...I had several more here in the states. I experienced a small heart attack during the second night and the third day the lower half of my lungs collapsed, and I had a tough time breathing. I was hospitalized here four days and released to recover at home once my blood levels were at a stable level. I have been in therapy twice a week since I returned and know that I still have a long way to go but would not be as far as I am had it not been for a wonderful group of women that I literally consider my lifesavers. On Friday afternoon, January 6th I contacted a neighbor just to ask that they pray for me and keep me in their thoughts after explaining the entire ordeal. Little did I know that she had been a Special Investigator for Sex Crimes for the Department of Homeland Security...this hit home for her and she got to work. By 8:00 that evening she had set up a Go Fund Me account to help with my \$8,000 of hospital bills and a food chain of neighbors to deliver food three times a week. During the following week, she organized a group "Sisterhood Against Sexual Assault" and had t-shirts made with all profits going to the

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Friday. Through Facebook posts and flyers, they advertised the Benefit that was held at Queens South in Waxhaw and the basket raffle. Through the Go Fund me and benefit they have raised over \$10,000 for the cause. They completely paid my medical bills and have the additional money to use for future victims/survivors. They have now incorporated this organization as a Non-profit organization and have not stopped working. They have put together over 20 bundles for the emergency room at the Waxhaw hospital that consist of all of the things that I wish that I had had...pajama pants (because they take your clothes), hairbrush, hair ties, facial washcloths, gum, socks etc. These will be given to victims/survivors that arrive in the emergency room. There are many other fundraisers planned but I know that the financial need to assist in the manner that the group would like to assist others is huge, so any additional donations are always appreciated.

I know that my journey to recovery is far from over and this group has been instrumental in helping me through it and through my hours of counseling (with many more to come) I refuse to let this act of pure evil define who I am...I will not ever think of myself as a victim...I am a survivor.