

Twenty Minutes of Rape

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JUN 22, 2016

"I so admire this woman, who had the guts to expose what she is going through and share it with the world."

Representative Cheri Bustos (D-IL) offered these thoughts on a night when a bipartisan group of 18 members of Congress stood in solidarity, each reading parts of a victim impact statement written by the survivor of a brutal sexual assault that occurred on Stanford University's campus in 2014. The story has resonated around the world.

In March of 2016, 20-year-old Brock Turner was convicted of three felony counts: sexually penetrating an unconscious person with a foreign object; sexually penetrating an intoxicated person with a foreign object; and assault with an intent to commit rape.

Despite the finding of guilt and the brutal details of the crime—which involved a college party, an incapacitated and unconscious victim, and bystanders intervening when they discovered the victim behind a dumpster not far from campus—Judge Aaron Persky decided to impose a sentence of only six months. This sentence was far less than the six years recommended by prosecutors, and only one-quarter of the normal two-year minimum sentence. Persky avoided minimum sentence by finding that "unusual circumstances" existed.

The short sentence shocked many, as did a statement written by the perpetrator's father defending his son's "20 minutes of action."

Bringing national attention to the case, CNN anchor Ashleigh Banfield spent more than an hour reading the survivor's full statement on air. The survivor's eloquence and emotion led the story to be carried by media worldwide.

Former Judge Representative Ted Poe (R-TX) spoke to fellow members of Congress about the case. "Mr. Speaker," Rep. Poe said, "I was a criminal court judge and prosecutor for 30 years, this judge got it wrong." Poe, who as co-founder of the Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus has led efforts to protect and support victims of sexual violence, continued: "As a country, we must change our mentality and make sure that our young people recognize sexual assault and rape for the heinous crimes that they are... As a grandfather, I want to know that my granddaughters are growing up in a society that has zero tolerance for this crime."

Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA) led a [one-hour "special order"](#) on the floor of the House of Representatives, during which members of Congress took turns reading the survivor's statement. "People must understand rape is one of the most violent crimes a person can commit," said Speier.

"This event, which was bipartisan and included both men and women, was unprecedented and demonstrates a rising awareness about these crimes and their devastating impact on survivors," said Rebecca O'Connor, RAINN's vice president for public policy. "This case focuses the national spotlight on ongoing challenges and the continued need to teach the difference between criminal acts and '20 minutes of action'; the need to support survivors when they bravely come forward and pursue justice against the odds; and the need to get to a place where rapists receive punishment that fits the crime."

In her statement, the survivor spoke to not only to the crimes themselves, but what happened after: "He is a lifetime sex registrant. That doesn't expire. Just like what he did to me doesn't expire, doesn't just go away after a set number of years. It stays with me, it's part of my identity, it has forever changed the way I carry myself, the way I live the rest of my life."

[#ActWithRAINN](#) to support survivors and join the fight against sexual violence.