

An Open Letter from the US Olympians and Paralympians Association to Athletes Everywhere:

We hear you.

We have heard your many stories detailing the sexual and emotional abuse you endured while training and competing in pursuit of your goals and your dreams. We applaud your individual and collective courage and conviction in coming forward and telling all....and calling out those who abused your trust.

We are both appalled by the actions of those who hurt you and deeply saddened by your suffering. For those whose stories we haven't heard (and may never hear) we respect your decision and your privacy...but also acknowledge the pain you feel in silence.

We are united in saying that there is no place for abuse in sport – at any age, at any level, in any venue. As Olympic and Paralympic alumni we want you to know we are a family that stands strong for the ideals of the Olympic/Paralympic movements.

When we, as athletes, returned from past Games, we shared an understanding that “The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity”. Now we must ask how can athlete dignity be preserved when the responsible institutions fail so in their oversight?

So what shall we do? We shall continue to advocate for education and Safe Sport, to teach young boys and girls to recognize the signs of abuse and provide a safe place to speak without repercussion. Parents, coaches and trainers need to be educated to recognize the signs and learn how to behave properly in coaching situations. We shall support Title IX, the Center for Safe Sport and pending federal legislation to protect our athletes.

For any of you who are currently in need (or know someone who is) the newly created and independent Center for SafeSport is available for confidential 24/7 reporting and crisis support:

www.safesport.org

24/7 SafeSport Crisis Helpline 866-200-0796

We know the power of commitment to a belief and to goals; our goal is that your experiences are never repeated. Together, we shall seek to create a way of life based on the joy of effort.

Together in Sport,

United States Olympians and Paralympians Association (USOPA) Executive Committee

President Dick Fosbury- Track & Field 1968

Willie Banks – Track & Field 1980/1984/1988

Allison Baver – Speed Skating 2002/2006/2010

Carol Brown – Rowing 1976/1980/1984

Candace Cable – Paralympic Track & Field – 1980/1988/1992/1996; Alpine Skiing 1992; Nordic Skiing 1994/1998/2002/2006

Caryn Davies – Rowing 2004/2008/2012

Gary Hall Sr. – Swimming 1968/1972/1976

Micki King – Diving 1968/1972

Carol Lewis – Track & Field 1980/1984/1988

John Naber – Swimming 1976

Bill Toomey – Track & Field 1968

Iris Zimmerman – Fencing 2000