

Statement of Julia Craighill

Good afternoon. Today we have seen justice, long denied, finally brought to the heinous actions of Christopher Kloman. But as one chapter closes, so opens another.

For almost 30 years, Christopher Kloman preyed on students. He was granted unlimited access to adolescent children by his employer, the Potomac School. We know that parents complained, and that Kloman was not only kept on as a teacher but later promoted.

I had hoped that my alma mater would have used the recent disclosure of its sordid past as an opportunity for introspection and apology to all of the stakeholders who were harmed by their actions – and above all to the children it served and promised to keep safe. Instead, it appears that to date, Potomac has chosen to characterize this as a mere blip of the past. Something regrettable, but to be forgotten.

I am speaking here today to ask that my school finally show some compassion for Kloman's victims and demonstrate an understanding that minimizing or refusing to acknowledge and fully address past abuse will only allow for the possibility that it may happen again. I ask that Potomac build on our courage and leadership, as well as the hard work of the detectives and prosecutors, to find out what happened decades ago.

I ask that Potomac undertake a full and thorough investigation into what its staff and administrators knew and when, and to be transparent in its findings, so that we all may learn from past errors and create systems so that this will never happen again.

It's not too late to regain the full trust and support of the community. I hope that Potomac will rise to this challenge and opportunity.

October 18, 2013

Statement of Laura Gill

My name is Laura Gill. I am a member of the class of 1977 at the Potomac School in McLean, VA. When I was 14 years old, administrator and teacher, Christopher Kloman stole from me a part of my childhood, forever altering my life. Today, this sexual predator is going to prison. There is certainly justice in this fact.

The truth remains, however, that I did not have to be Chris Kloman's victim. I believe that others reported Kloman years before this ever happened to me. What did Potomac School know and when did they know it? What actions, if any, did the school take to address Kloman's abusive behavior? What did Potomac do to minimize the dire effects his sexual abuse had on his victims? Many more girls, like me, were sexually abused over the course of years. Many, if not all, were Potomac students. Yet, Chris Kloman was allowed to continue to steal childhoods with impunity.

I stand here with other survivors in the hopes that by speaking out today, other children can escape the lifelong effects of sexual abuse. This is not the first time I tell my story; the first time was to my parents, who immediately reported it to the school. Despite their complaints, Kloman stayed on as teacher and Head of the Upper School where daily, I was forced to pass him in the hallways, unable to avoid his stare, knowing that I had been wronged, and feeling unprotected by the very people entrusted with my safety.

Now that Chris Kloman's behaviors are public, my sincere hope is that the Potomac School will revisit how it handled this matter. As a child, I understood that Potomac would care and look out for me, all the while teaching me how to live in the world. Instead my trust was grossly betrayed. Potomac's current administration should do the right thing and fully investigate its past actions, learn from its mistakes, and take public and proactive steps to ensure sexual abuse by school staff never happens again.

Thank you.

October 18, 2013

Statement of Jane Gould

My 7th grade class picture features a buck-toothed girl in pigtails. That little girl, facing the break up of her parents' marriage, was an easy victim for a sexual predator like Chris Kloman. I wanted to feel special and his invitations to ski trips, bike trips, swimming outings, and Washington Senators games met my need. His taking advantage of his position as my math and geography teacher to isolate me and engage in inappropriate sexual contact violated the trust explicitly placed in him by the Potomac School, my mother, and me.

It is a good thing that he pleaded guilty to the charges of sexual abuse brought against him and that he has been sentenced to prison today.

I stand here today with my Potomac School sisters. Some I have known since birth and others I have gotten to know in our journey of truth-telling and justice-seeking.

Potomac raised us to value above all else integrity, character and community. We are the girls Potomac taught us to be.

Unfortunately, Potomac School did not hold itself accountable to the same high values. Instead of terminating the employment of a pedophile, Potomac promoted Chris Kloman giving him more power and greater access to children.

I have spent my adult life serving as a priest in the Episcopal Church and living in boarding schools where my husband of 31 years taught. I know the transformative work of institutions exposing betrayals of trust and engaging truth-telling processes. Living in the Boston area, I also know well the cost of cultures of cover up.

Cultures of cover up perpetuate patterns of betrayals of trust. It is past time for Potomac to step up, to investigate the abuse perpetrated by Chris Kloman over multiple decades and to invite the broader Potomac community of students, faculty and alumni to engage a truth-telling process.

In a letter to the Potomac Community last night, Head of School John Kowalik wrote, "We are doing all that we can to create a safe and healthy learning environment. Rest assured that if there are allegations of any kind of inappropriate behavior in the future, we will act immediately."

We ask that Potomac shine light into corners and look under the rugs of the past so that his words might be our school's reality and not simply empty words of comfort.

October 18, 2013

Statement of Anne Sullivan

Imagine my surprise. Walking down the hallway of my son's school and seeing Mr. Kloman, the 7th grade teacher who assaulted me in a swimming pool 40 years earlier.

Kloman still had access to kids? My son's classmates could be his victims!
Enough. One generation of abusing kids is one generation too much. One girl is too much. The clouds of concern started to gather in my mind. The old worries, insomnia and anxiety.

Not long after, the Sandusky case broke and the Head of my son's school sent out a Friday alert. Essentially: Zero tolerance for sex abuse in this school. If you see something, say something. On Monday morning I was in his office. Kloman was taken off the substitute list. The authorities were notified, and the investigation began.

And get this. Those of us who testified today are the lucky ones. For the most part, from what I know, we are the ones LEAST touched by Kloman. We are the ones for whatever reasons, with the MOST support, the BEST able to speak for ourselves. There are others whose lives have been utterly ruined, who are not here today. It is also for them we speak out.

October 18, 2013