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Statement of Faith Rodgers

Three years ago, as a 19 year-old young woman, I started this journey, the journey in telling my truth. There was no real preparation for the harassment, the loss of friends, the days of hating what I saw in the mirror because of online comments, the feeling of loneliness that slept with me every night through it all. But the people I've had physically around me in this journey that felt like a one-woman battle reminded me that the sacrifice I made was well worth it and not in vain.

I hope any young woman following my story was inspired, but especially my young, black, female peers. To them I say, please do not be afraid to free yourself and speak your truth. In this journey while fighting for myself, I stood against many lies and opinions from those in my own community, but I kept going. Your inner strength will lead you to healing.

It was disheartening to see, even years and a second trial later, that the abuser -my abuser and the abuser of many women - is being held up as a victim and even considered to be "railroaded." The women who were victims of R. Kelly had many nights of being reminded of their trauma, which resulted from being abused by R. Kelly. I hope the conviction makes it a little easier to think about

those times. And, when you have those nights of anxiety, worry, or just feeling left out because you made the choice to stop your abuser, know that it was not in vain. I pray that instead of pointing the finger, we can learn to take care of and truly protect our black women.

I heard Andrew Wyatt, a spokesperson for Bill Cosby, say R. Kelly was “railroaded.” To use the term “railroaded” is beyond insulting to me.

After meeting R. Kelly at 19 years-old, for that year and a half he manipulated me for his own enjoyment and sexually abused me and tried to control me. When I made the choice to come forward with my story, he threatened me on multiple occasions that if I continued to go forward with the telling of my truth, he would publish nude pictures of me. Despite the threats, I continued to tell what happened to me and as a result, R. Kelly retaliated against me and published those photos. Even though he did this, I refused to back down and I still testified at the trial.

R. Kelly received a fair trial, and he was convicted based on the evidence. He was not “railroaded.”

Thank you to my parents. *Thank you* to Gloria Allred. *Thank you* to Lee Merritt. And, *thank you* to all survivors of abuse who have shared their stories with me, gave me support and still to this day help me. The greatest gift was not the conviction, but knowing I helped someone else in my shoes.

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Represented by Gloria Allred
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