

# Pandora's Project

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## Invisible No More: Working to end sexual assault in the U.S. military

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Your editorial team:  
Ash, Kristy, Jennifer, & Jackie



### Inside this issue:

Since 2006, more than 95,000 service members have been sexually assaulted in the U.S. military.

The results of analysis of sexual assault allegations in the U.S. military in 2009-2010 showed that out of 2,039 allegations, only 551 went to court martial and less than half of those resulted in any type of conviction.

These shocking statistics have galvanized many to

form a movement towards making a change.

*Invisible No More* is a non-partisan coalition working to end sexual assault within the U.S. military and to help survivors of Military Sexual Assault heal.

Their three main objectives are to a) Raise awareness, b) Effect political and cultural change and c) Serve as a means of healing for survivors of Military Sexual Assault.

Their [website](#) contains a host of resources to help those affected by sexual assault, including ways to get involved.

If you are interested in becoming a part of this movement, we encourage you to take a look at their [website](#) and contact your representatives to help keep this issue on the legislative agenda.

## The Invisible War

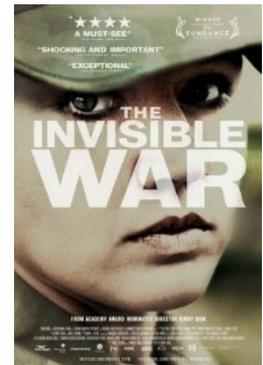
The Invisible War was a 2012 Academy Award Nominee for Best Documentary Feature.

This outstanding documentary chronicles the lives of several survivors, both men and women, of military sexual assault and their search

for justice.

The film highlights the need for changes in the way that military sexual assault cases are handled.

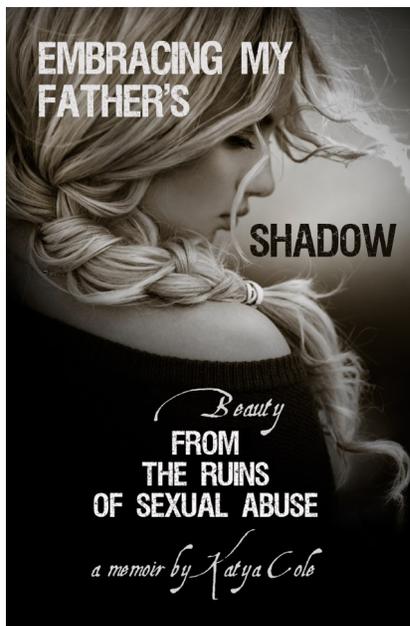
Watch the [trailer](#) and see how you can get involved in this very important cause.



## Spotlight: Katya Cole

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"*Embracing My Father's Shadow* is the all-encompassing story of my struggle to overcome a history of sexual abuse. I decided to share my story in full upon the realization that I don't remember much of my childhood. In that sense, writing was therapeutic for me seeing as I had to relive it, but I also wrote with the purpose of wanting to give women something I didn't have in the midst of my suffering. *Embracing My Father's Shadow* was born out of my desire to share my story and my faith in God.



My next book, *Deathbed Beauty*, will be released on October 4, 2013. Numerous books address beauty and body image concerns as they relate to media and culture, but what if those issues exist under an additional layer of shame and distortion namely sexual abuse? To feel like the ugliest person on the planet and also be convinced that beauty and sex determine worth is without a doubt overwhelming and heart-breaking. This coming together of two very opposite poles—this performance-based paradox—is poison to a woman's soul. These poles that are similar in nature have distinct origins as well as opposite pulls, one magnetism being sexualization and the other draw being shame. One tug is to reveal more of the body at all cost; the other is to hide it under all circumstances, but neither is what God intended. In *Deathbed Beauty*, I tell the story of my journey through beauty insecurity, explore these poles, and evaluate God's Word to define real beauty."

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### Healing Exercise: Finding Your Calm in Stressful Situations By Jennifer

We all have anxiety over something, and often anxieties that stem from abuse are pushed aside as "silly" in our heads. That doesn't do anything to help nerves on end. When you experience a stressful situation, do you find that is sometimes compounded with uneasy feelings from something unrelated to the situation at hand? Such as past trauma? You're not alone.

It can be tough to regroup your thoughts and settle your mind. Take three deep breaths. Count to five each time you inhale, and again to five as you exhale. Find an object that can help you ground yourself. A coin, a rock, a paperclip—anything will do. Hold this item in your hand and focus your thoughts on how it feels as you continue to take deep breaths. Is it hot? Is it cool? What's the texture? Focusing your thoughts on what you feel in your hand can help you stay in the moment, and can break the panicked feelings or thought cycle.

What do you do to keep yourself present?

## An essay by Perhapsapoet

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I ride the subway roughly six times a week, and if you were to observe my trips from some secret omniscient view, you would see Person #2,902,678,520 performing everyday Action #2,902,678,520. Specifically, you would see a short high school kid with an ordinary face and a thirty-pound backpack walking into a subway car, standing or sitting for a few stops, and then walking out. But let me tell you about what really happens.

I am a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. My subway ride begins with carefully slipping into the quietest car, so I can avoid the crowding that inevitably raises my anxiety. Like many survivors, I struggle with "hypervigilance"- I am sharply aware of my surroundings because in some visceral way, I have learned to perceive the world as dangerous. And supposing I manage to nab a seat, I make sure there are no men standing nearby. I don't hate men, and I don't want to be this way, but my brain snaps into safety mode as soon as I register that there is a male figure hovering over me. I immediately feel as if I am physically choking and my body screams that I am not safe; my body insists that the man standing over me is *Him*, not Joe-On-His-Way-To-Work; it is *Him* back to hurt me again; it is *Him* back to kill me, just as promised. Of course, I logically understand that this is ridiculous. Poor Joe-On-His-Way-To-Work is a full foot shorter than the person who hurt me, and his eyes are blue, not brown, and he probably wouldn't

hurt a fly. But I can't deny the fact that my throat is closing, and I don't want to hyperventilate in public, so I subtly slide into the next seat and wring my hands, as if to remind myself that I am here, now, in this young adult body.

Once I'm as settled as I ever manage to be, I get around to noticing that there are seven other females in the subway car. *That's eight total*, I muse. *Approximately one out of every four women experience a sexual assault during their lifetime, and I'm one out of eight, so who's the second person?* I count sixteen men. Probably at least one survivor among them, if not more, especially since male sexual assaults are underreported. Then I wonder, *Are any of these people perpetrators? I don't know the statistics for perpetrators, but I do know it could be any person in this subway car, no matter their gender, age, or race.* I go back to wringing my hands.

And perhaps I am limited by the experiences I myself have had, but I truly cannot fathom a more complete violation than that of sexual assault. From what I understand, healthy, consensual sex is an aspect of being human that encompasses most if not all other aspects of being human- emotional, physical, social, and spiritual. Following that same thread, sexual abuse is synonymous with the abuse of a person's very humanity: dehumanization. It seems that many associate dehumanization with blatant (Con't on next page)

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### Newsletter Team News...

A big welcome to **Jennifer** (often known as "Niffer"), who has been a part of Pandy's since 2004 when she joined as a member. She has filled several roles in the past nine years: member, chat mod, and moderator.

She is excited to be joining the newsletter team! Jennifer is from the States, and travels cross-country with her beloved dog. She has lived on both coasts and now lives somewhere in the middle of the United States!

Congratulations to **Kristy** and her husband as they welcomed their first child, a baby girl born this past month. We look forward to Kristy getting back to her newsletter contributions once she is able to get some sleep!





## An essay by Perhapsapoet (cont.)

brutality- a violent crime committed by a stranger, for example. But this is a gaping misconception. No matter who the perpetrator is, and no matter what exactly the perpetrator does, and no matter when it happens, and no matter how many times it happens, and no matter who it happens to, sexual abuse is a trauma that reaches into the core of the victim; sexual abuse is a trauma that shakes the very foundation of one's personhood.

There is no "leaving the past in the past" because I don't know about you, but I haven't found the little box where my past is supposed to *go*. Each person's past is inherently ingrained into their present, and for a survivor in the midst of healing, the past tends to gather so much power and energy; the past tends to demand that we struggle until we reach some kind of unique personal acceptance of our entire being- past, present, future, and otherwise. We are not "dwelling" on an event that we should simply "get over." Rather, like all humans, survivors are quilts. We are many pieces- many painful and beautiful pieces- that create an individual. Healing is not to cut out the pieces we don't like. Healing is to exist in the positive spaces we create within ourselves as much as possible, and healing is to embrace all of our layers as part of a whole that belongs on this earth.

Every day when I wake up in the morning, I have to coexist with the fact that someone- in my case, multiple people- made the decision to treat me as a shell of myself. People with free agency. People capable of making personal choices. They made the personal choice to cast their own desires over my very right to be human; they made the personal choice to crush *my* personal choice. . I was vulnerable because I was a child, and instead of protecting me, these adults took what they wanted. How can I contend with the fact that I was only a little girl when I was raped? This question is one from an endless list containing many questions I can speak to and many questions that others can speak to in ways that I cannot. We each have different challenges to contend with, but as a community, we struggle with the same single truth: we will never get answers. We will never be able to pry into the minds of those who hurt us and we will never be able to extract explanations, let alone explanations that bring any kind of safety or closure. We must face the aftereffects of our abusers' choices, whatever those aftereffects may be- flashbacks, triggers, nightmares, fears, grief- often on a daily basis for months or years at a time. We must strive to one day know in every facet of our being, more days than not, that we are greater than what we were given. We must strive, and so we do, every day, all around you, whether or not you are aware.

### New Resource available For Male Survivors in Canada

Men are often overlooked in discussions about survivors. In Canada, it is estimated that one in six men have been sexually abused by age 18. As such, a new resource has been introduced in Canada to support male survivors. On August 12th, Canadian Attorney General and Minister of Justice Peter MacKay announced \$120,000 in funding would be provided to [1in6 Canada](#) not only to support male survivors, but also their secondary survivors, such as spouses, partners, family, and friends.

1in6 Canada was created in March after the Ottawa-based counseling agency [The Men's Project](#) recognized the lack of resources nationally for male survivors. They launched [1in6.org](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that survivors and secondary survivors across the nation will be able to use.

Rick Goodwin, executive director of The Men's Project indicated that the average age of male sexual abuse is between nine and 10, and that many men don't reach out for help dealing with that trauma until they are in their late 40s.

With the federal funding of this national program, more men will have access to resources, and will hopefully be able to break their silence much earlier.

You can visit [1in6.org here](#), and learn about the programs they offer, such as their 24 hour online support line and lending library. Read statistics, myths and facts about male sexual abuse, participate in community outreach, or reach out for yourself!

**Sources:** <https://1in6.org>, <http://www.themensproject.ca>, [http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/news-nouv/nr-cp/2013/doc\\_32932.html](http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/news-nouv/nr-cp/2013/doc_32932.html)