Nassar’s abuse reflects more than 50 years of men’s power over female athletes

By Anne Blaschke, The Conversation

“You’ve got a lucky boyfriend.” These were the words the physician’s assistant conducting my gynecological exam in 1998 uttered as he suggestively smiled down at me over my paper gown. I lay on the exam table, 20 years old, wondering what to say back. Feeling angry, embarrassed and violated, I called my mom afterward. We both reported him. Whether he still works there, I don’t know.

That experience disgusted me then and now, from my current perspective as a historian who studies gender and American political culture. But I recognized that I was fortunate in several ways. My mother believed me. It was an inappropriate comment perhaps perversely meant as flirtation, however predatory, rather than an assault. And I never had to see him again.

America’s elite female gymnasts had far more devastating experiences under recently convicted sports medicine doctor Larry Nassar. On Jan. 24, the court sentenced Nassar to 40 to 175 years for his sexual abuse of more than 150 young female athletes, in the biggest sexual abuse crisis in American sport history. In the context of #MeToo, Nassar is perhaps the only sexual predator more monstrous in the public eye than Harvey Weinstein.

But a look at the history of women athletes in America shows that Nassar’s abuse represents a historical pattern of sexual violation of young females by male power brokers in sport. After World War II, millions of women streamed into sport, where men had increasing access to, and control over, young

female athletes.

Most sport leaders have supported athletes rather than abused them, and postwar federal laws like Title IX and the Amateur Sports Act aimed to empower athletes across gender. But since educational institutions, Olympic authorities and the federal government have not strictly enforced these laws, they've ironically created opportunities for abuse.

Female control, feminine education

In the early 20th century, very few men associated with young female athletes. Men disdained women's competitive sport, and women physical education teachers insisted on control of girls, lest male coaches "masculinize" the female sex or harm them in any way.

With girls securely under their control, and to avoid suspicion that female administrators were turning students into lesbians, phys ed teachers front-loaded femininity by emphasizing ladylike fitness and decorum, rather than the exhilarating experience of competition. Academic administrators also barred "respectable" – meaning white Protestant – girls from interscholastic contests.

Most men didn't come into contact with these female athletes until the Cold War began. Then the Soviet Union racked up medals in women's events at its first Olympiad in 1952, rattling Americans by placing second. U.S. politicians, diplomats and male coaches decided to take women's sport seriously to score national wins in glamorous international competitions.

Female athletes of color, as well as religious and ethnic club athletes, had long dominated American women's "mannish" competitive sports, like track and field. But the 1950s now saw white Protestant teens competing in "acceptably" feminine sports like figure skating, gymnastics and swimming, in order to further cultural diplomatic wins for U.S. capitalist

democracy.

Federal sex equality in law

During this time, no law existed to protect young athletes from men's sexual abuse in educational institutions. For example, in 1964, when 14-year-old swimmer Diana Nyad's elite coach began a three-year pattern of sexually assaulting her, her high school principal was not legally bound to investigate suspicious rumors about the coach.

Then, in 1972, the U.S. passed Title IX, a law mandating equal treatment for the sexes in educational institutions receiving federal funding. In a massive score for gender equity improvement, female athletes flooded into competitive sport.

At the same time, Title IX increased men's access to female athletes. Even during "women's liberation" of the 1970s, endemic sexism prevented women from achieving at least partial parity in leadership positions. As the NCAA grew increasingly eager to control women's sport and Americans saw female athletes as legitimate, schools and private organizations increasingly hired men for authority positions that women had often previously held, like coaching, management and athletic directorship.

As in most national industries, men commanded higher salaries and prestige than females. Today, in college sports, just 40 percent of women's coaches and 22.4 percent of athletic directors are women.

Men also continued to dominate sports medicine. Though increasing numbers of women became medical doctors after Title IX mandated their acceptance in graduate programs, men still hold the majority of sports medicine jobs in prestigious power roles, like Nassar's at USA Gymnastics, the U.S. Olympic Committee and Michigan State.

Men disproportionately specialize in orthopedics – and,

because so many elite athletes suffer bone or muscle injuries, they often see these specialists.

As Aly Raisman emphasized in her testimony against Nassar, other adults pointed to his orthopedic expertise as a reason the girls had to continue to be treated by him. Nassar's patients started reporting his abusive behavior in the 1990s. Had any of the adult authority figures to whom they reported actually followed up on the students' Title IX complaints, two decades of abuse could have been avoided.

No consequences, more abuse

The 1978 Amateur Sports Act, which chartered the U.S. Olympic Committee, and the 1998 Ted Stevens Act, which modernized it after the Cold War, are other examples of federal law intending but failing to protect girls and women.

These laws direct the U.S. Olympic Committee to appoint separate national governing bodies, like USA Gymnastics, to autonomously govern their sports under the U.S. Olympic Committee umbrella. But that federal approach does not, according to the charter, absolve the U.S. Olympic Committee of its ultimate responsibility to athletes. Instead, the law also chartered the U.S. Olympic Committee to ethically support athletes' medical and sports safety and to provide "amateur athletic opportunities for women."

But neither USA Gymnastics not the U.S. Olympic Committee acted to protect female athletes under Nassar. They failed to follow up on many reports of abuse or pass claims along to law enforcement. In sheltering Nassar and other male perpetrators at the expense of female athletes' health, the U.S. Olympic Committee failed every girl and woman whom Nassar examined under the authority of USA Gymnastics.

This failure isn't unique to gymnastics. When Yasmin Brown's Taekwondo coach began abusing her in 2010, neither USA Taekwondo nor the U.S. Olympic Committee took concrete steps

to remove the coach, leading to his continued abuse of Brown and other girls.

In the cases of both Title IX and the Ted Stevens Act, had the adults in charge of these predatory men taken female athletes' need for protection seriously, athlete abuse could have been curtailed.

For predators, this lax oversight created increasing opportunities to assault young women, even as those laws gave females initial access to sport. Because the federal government has historically enforced Title IX weakly at best, schools don't feel pressured to act on reports of abuse. No educational institution has ever lost its Title IX funding.

Nassar's sexual abuse of girl athletes represents decades of male-dominant institutions, such as elite sport organizations and athletic departments, whose policies and actions protected perpetrators rather than athletes. When these groups refuse to act, they choose to win at the expense of athletes' safety and well-being.

Anne Blaschke is a visiting assistant professor of history at the College of the Holy Cross.

House fire displaces tourists in Incline Village

One person was injured in an early morning house fire Saturday in Incline Village.

North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District crews were called out to Spencer Way at 5:33am Feb. 4.

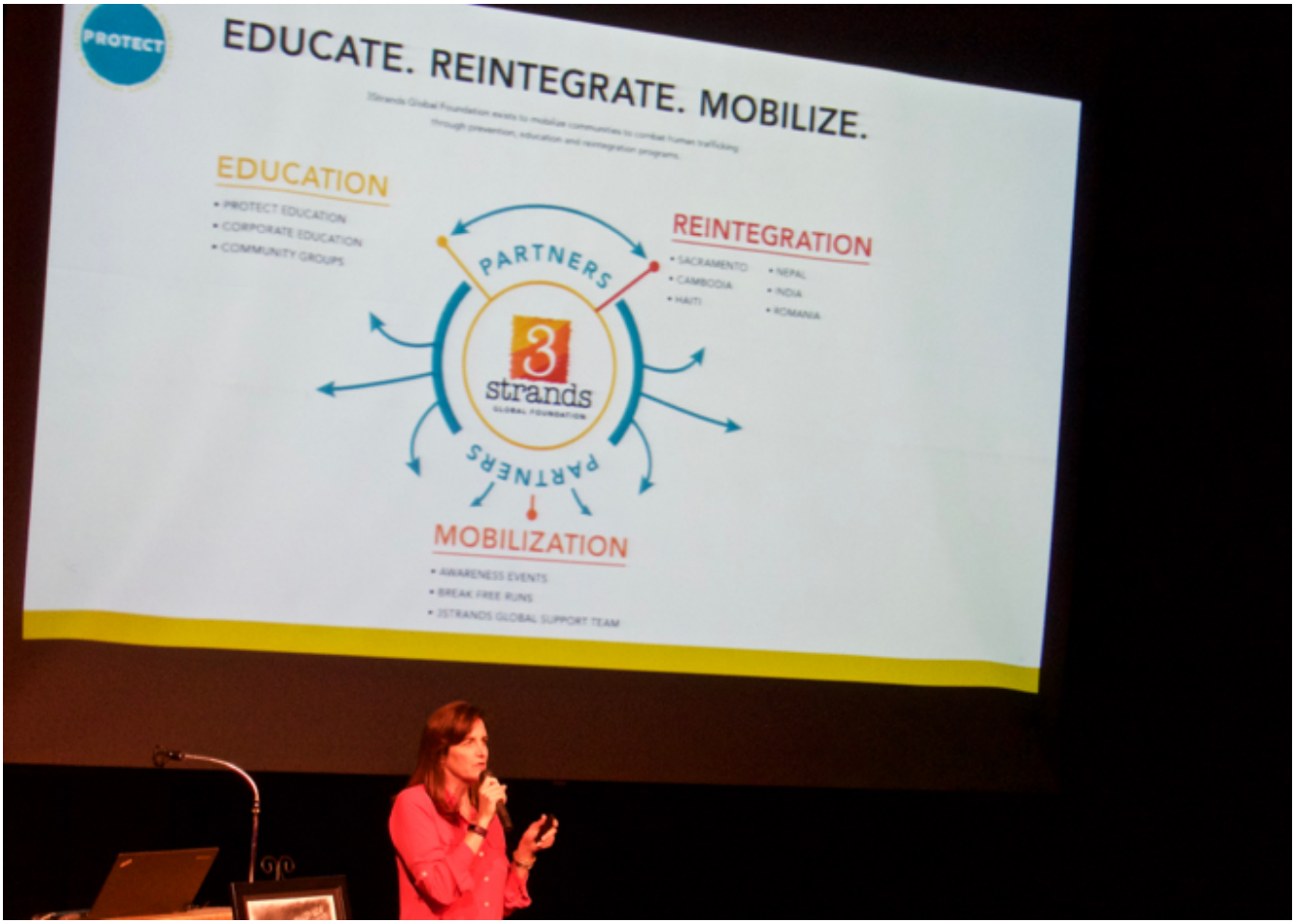
The eight adults, eight children and two dogs were able to escape. One adult was treated on scene and released.

The cause of the fire at the vacation rental is under investigation.

The estimated damage loss has not been released.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Human trafficking now a topic in schools



Ashlie Bryant, co-founder and president of 3Strands, talks

about human trafficking. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

While human trafficking – better known as forced prostitution – has been a subject of several talks in South Lake Tahoe, the extent of the problem locally has not been well documented.

During a presentation last week someone asked how prevalent the problem is in South Lake Tahoe.

The answer: "We don't have the data." South Shore law enforcement along with the FBI, which has a local office, is "trying to create it."

Those working to combat the problem are also working to change the vocabulary. Instead of pimp, trafficker or exploiter is issued. Instead of john, it's buyer. Instead of prostitute, it's exploited victim.

The Jan. 30 get together at Lake Tahoe Community College was put on by PATH – Partners Against Trafficking of Humans. This is a group that was created in 2014 out of Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe.

Predators lurk wherever kids hang out – near schools, ski slopes, malls. Victims don't fit a profile. They come from all socio-economic backgrounds, and every race. While mostly it's girls who are targeted, boys are not immune from being exploited.

A couple of videos were shown with the survivors telling their stories how the nightmare began. Often it's a slightly older man who befriends them and they become a couple. One made $85 a night in tips as a waitress. The guy said he had a way she would make 10 times that amount in a night. He had her work in a strip club. She was convinced he was good for her, that she was making money for their future.

It leads to her having sex for money. Sometimes she is sold to others.

Often it starts with this guy being so sweet, buying her things, making her feel special, being affectionate and saying he loves her.

It can be hard to get out. Threats are made – such as telling family and friends what she has been doing. Physical abuse may have started.

Much of the evening was a presentation by members of 3Strands Global Foundation, which was created in 2010 after a 17-year-old West Slope girl was trafficked for eight days. Their goal is to rid the world of human trafficking. They want to disrupt the economy of this business.

One way of doing this is through Assembly Bill 1227 that was signed last year by Gov. Jerry Brown and took effect Jan. 1. It is known as the Human Trafficking Prevention and Education Act.

According to Ashlie Bryant, co-founder and president of 3Strands, the bill requires all California schools to provide curriculum about human trafficking to fifth-, seventh- ninth-, and 11th-graders. Younger students learn about boundaries; older kids are taught to recognize tactics.

An audience member asked if the curriculum was in Lake Tahoe Unified School District classrooms. No, was the answer. The 3Strands reps said they've gotten push back locally.

"The board's perspective is that we always have to investigate curriculum options before the district brings the information before our students. Although the process may seem cumbersome to the outside eyes, the board wants any information – especially topics that are as difficult as human trafficking – to be fully checked out. We are dealing with children and want to provide the most accurate and appropriately delivered

message," LTUSD board President Barbara Bannar told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I did check with (Superintendent) Jim Tarwater and he stated that there was no push back on this topic."

The district said there was a community meeting two years ago to talk to parents and students about the dangers of human trafficking, which 3Strands attended, as well as law enforcement. 3Strands officials have conducted presentations for freshmen at South Tahoe High School each of the last two years and plan to do so again this spring.

One issue with the state law is that it is an unfunded mandate – meaning there is no money to implement it. Plus, there is always the issue that when something is added to the school day, something has to be taken away.

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Notes:

Statistics from 3Strands website:

· There are nearly 2 million children worldwide exploited in the global sex trade; each year, as many as 100,000-300,000 American children are at risk of being trafficked for commercial sex in the United States.

· The average age of a trafficking victim in the United States is 11-14.

· There are approximately 20 million victims held in modern slavery globally.

· Human trafficking is a $150 billion global industry, annually. In the U.S. alone, a $9.8 billion industry.

· All 50 states in the U.S., and 167 countries have reported incidents of human trafficking.

Caesars real estate owner raises more money than expected in IPO

By Todd Prince, Las Vegas Review-Journal

VICI, the owner of nearly two dozen Caesars Entertainment Corp. properties, raised more money in an initial public offering of stock than it anticipated amid strong demand.

The Las Vegas-based real estate investment trust sold 60.5 million shares at $20 a piece, raising $1.21 billion, the company said it a statement late Wednesday. The company initially sought to sell 50 million shares between $19 and $21.

VICI also increased the over-allotment option to 9.1 million shares from 7.5 million. That will enable the company to raise an additional $181 million in the IPO.

Caesars is the parent company of Harrah’s Lake Tahoe and Harveys.

Read the whole story

Life-threatening injuries in

suspected DUI crash



Five people in this BMW were injured on Feb. 3 on the South Shore. Photo/LVFPD

By Kathryn Reed

A Stateline woman was arrested Saturday on felony DUI charges that injured five other people, two of them with life-threatening injuries.

Bail was set at $125,000 for Hui Paxson, 29.

Paxson was driving east on Pioneer Trail near Vanderhoof Drive just after 11am Feb. 3 when she drifted into oncoming traffic, the California Highway Patrol told *Lake Tahoe News.* The Land Rover struck a BMW carrying five people.

Two people were flown to Renown Medical Center in Reno, with the others taken to Barton Memorial Hospital in South Lake Tahoe.

Lake Valley Fire officials said it took 20 minutes to extricate the front passenger of the BMW. She was one of the most critically injured. She was wearing a seat belt.

Because this is an on-going investigation, it is not known if everyone was wearing a seat belt.



Pioneer Trail on Feb. 3 was closed while emergency crews tended to victims in a head-on collision. Photo/Mike Rhoden

The other people were either out of the vehicle walking around or sitting when first responders arrived.

Some of the injuries sustained by the victims include a broken jaw, spinal fracture, brain bleed, concussion and compression fracture of the spine.

Occupants of the BMW were from out of town, with some from Napa, San Jose and China.

Paxson was taken to Barton before being booked into jail.

The road was close for about two hours as both of the totaled vehicles were cleared and officers collected evidence.

Calif. cities: Pension costs ‘unsustainable’

By Adam Ashton, Sacramento Bee

Most California cities expect their spending on public employee pensions to climb by at least 50 percent over the next seven years, restricting their ability to fund basic services like public safety and parks, according to a study their lobbying organization released on Thursday.

The report escalates the League of California Cities’ appeal for more flexibility in negotiating pension obligations. Almost all of California’s cities belong to the $360 billion California Public Employees’ Retirement System, and some cities over the past year have raised increasingly loud complaints that fee hikes from the pension fund are “crowding out” other spending priorities.

The new report warns that pension costs are becoming “unsustainable.”

Read the whole story

Placer County opens tourism grant process

Placer County has revised the application process for entities wanting grant money coming from North Lake Tahoe lodging

taxes.

Applications will first be reviewed by the new 13-member Capital Projects Advisory Committee. The committee, co-chaired by the county and North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, will evaluate project proposals on how well they advance key priorities outlined in the county's Tourism Master Plan, and will make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

Placer County is seeking applications from community members for four seats on the CAP Committee. These seats, appointed for three-year terms, are intended to represent community interests in housing, social services, arts and culture. The applications are due Feb. 21

Last year, Placer County collected approximately $18 million in transient occupancy taxes. The county is committed to investing 100 percent of lodging taxes generated in North Lake Tahoe to support tourism and implement the Tourism Master Plan.

Grant applications are due March 30 at noon. Here are the guidelines.

Nearly half of California is back in a drought

By Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

The T-shirt-wearing temperatures and lack of winter rain have combined to push nearly half of California into all-too-familiar territory: a state of drought.

Less than a year after Gov. Jerry Brown declared an end to one

of the worst droughts in California history, a consortium of nationwide water experts reported Thursday that 44 percent of the state is again experiencing at least moderate drought conditions.

The plight is worst in Southern California, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

Read the whole story

SLT city attorney bill far exceeds contract limit

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is in uncharted territory with having a firm doing its legal work instead of having an in-house attorney, as had been the protocol for 50-plus years until last fall.

When Tom Watson submitted his resignation in August which became effective in September, the city also employed a deputy city attorney and a legal secretary. The city still has a legal secretary.



Nira Doherty

Burke, Williams & Sorensen LLP out of Oakland was brought on

board to take the place of Watson and his deputy.

This firm had been used as outside counsel, so the city was familiar with their work. Plus, Nira Doherty, the attorney assigned to South Lake Tahoe, had been the deputy city attorney before becoming a partner with the private law firm. She had also worked as outside counsel for the city, so her familiarity with local issues was a bonus.

Outside counsel is usually brought in for specific cases much like in the medical profession when a specialist is needed because the general practitioner's knowledge has been exhausted.

The firm's contract calls for 80 hours of legal work a month at a rate of $19,500/month or $234,000/annually. They actually bill in six-minute increments.

However, the actual monthly bills from the law firm are:

- October – general municipal services – $40,046.24
- October – retiree association lawsuit – $16,726.12
- November – general municipal services – $34, 097.44
- November – retiree association lawsuit – $6,037.38
- December – general municipal services – $21,961.44
- December – retiree association lawsuit – $4,762.84.

That's a total of $123,631.46 for three months. Without the retiree lawsuit fees, the total is $96,105.12. Either way, the monthly bill exceeds what the contract calls for. Multiply that last quarter by four and the annual bill will actually be $384,420.48.

Watson was making more than $160,000 a year. His hours per week, month, year were unlimited. Even if one tacks on 25 percent for benefits, that total is just more than $200,000 a

year. An in-house attorney is essentially available 24/7, with no overtime.

Lake Tahoe News through a public records request asked about the details of the bills from Burke, Williams & Sorensen. City Clerk Suzie Alessi responded that that information was protected by client-attorney confidentiality.

Lake Tahoe News then requested all phone records and all emails every city employee and every council member has had with anyone at Burke, Williams & Sorensen. Redacted emails would be acceptable. The deadline per the Public Records Act has not been met, so the information will likely be published at a later date.

Ironically, though, it is Doherty who has some say over what records are released. She is not a fan of the media, not even when she was on the city's staff full time. She has a history of not responding to questions no matter the forum in which a reporter asks.

All of this is relevant because this is taxpayer money. The public has a right to know what it is paying for and if it is worth it. The council also has an obligation to explain its actions.

Doherty's review was on the Jan. 23 council agenda, as was the city manager's. There was no reportable action regarding either official.

Mayor Wendy David had no response to *LTN*'s question as to why nothing is on the Feb. 6 agenda about the city attorney when the city manager's review is on it again.

At some point the council has to decide what it is doing regarding the city attorney position – in-house, outside counsel, and if outside, is this the attorney and/or law firm to stick with?

Each of the City Council members was asked a series of questions and given a deadline. Only Tom Davis responded. He told *Lake Tahoe News*, "I too have the same questions. I will be asking that these items be put on the agenda so we can discuss in public with the council."

Here are the unanswered questions:

· Regarding the future of the city attorney position … when does the council expect to make a decision regarding retaining the current law firm and/or interim attorney or deciding to have someone in-house full time?

· How was the current firm/attorney hired without an RFP? How is that not a violation of Government Code?

· Is the reason there is no contract for the current firm on the next agenda because you realized there needs to be an RFP? If that isn't the reason, what is the reason?

· Is there an expiration date, so to speak, in the current contract?

· What happens when the financial limits of the contract are met? Does that mean the city is without legal counsel? Please explain how that works.

· There was no reportable action from the last council meeting regarding the city attorney's review. Why? What is the next course of action?

· How does the council justify the expense of this firm?

· How often do each of you contact anyone at the law firm on a weekly/monthly basis? Please estimate how much time is by phone, email, text or in person?

· Do you find this form of city attorney more efficient or in-house counsel more efficient? Why?

A question just for Councilman Jason Collin was:

· Do you believe you should recuse yourself from any discussions regarding the city attorney when you socialize with her and are good friends with her husband? Why or why not?

Meadow damage from 4-wheeler



Damage to a South Lake Tahoe from a vehicle. Photo/Paul Potts/USFS

The meadow near Heavenly Creek off Pioneer Trail in South Lake Tahoe was recently damaged by someone driving on it.

If the person is caught, he or she could face a citation punishable by a fine of $5,000 or more and/or six months in jail.

The U.S. Forest Service said it will continue to monitor areas throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin for compliance to protect natural resources.