

Statement from Maxine Ann Welch To the Guyana Empowered Peoples Action Network (GEPAN) and the Media

I was working as an Administrative Officer at the Regional Democratic Council Region Nine under the auspices of the REO Mr. Parker; he was a man that I looked up to trusted and one who motivated me to strive in order to achieve my goals, life was good for me with the two jobs, one of which is voluntary (Deputy Mayor and Councillor of Constituency 3).

After the Ministry of Indigenous People's affairs launched the HEYS programme countrywide I was asked by the REO to go to Yupukari Village North Rupununi; the purpose was to give words of encouragement to the participants of the HEYS programme that was being launched. As a young woman who is passionate about youth empowerment I gladly accepted the offer and packed my bags for the trip. We were scheduled to go to Parishara village first then to Yupukari the following day. When we departed from Lethem, I was surprised to find out that there were no other officers from the RDC on the trip even though I was told that other officers were supposed to join us. When I inquired about same he told me that the AREO could not make it.

We spent the night at Caiman house in Yupukari. It was a single room since he informed me that there were no other vacant rooms in the lodge. However, without informing him I opted to ask the manager of the Lodge myself if there were other rooms, and I was thereby told that there were lots of other vacant rooms but that the REO (Mr. Parker) only requested one. I must reiterate the fact that I trusted Mr. Carl Parker very much and as Administrative Officer I am aware that on trips like those we tried to conserve our funds by doubling up so since the manager also informed me that the room had two beds I decided that he was harmless and I would cooperate to make the trip a success.

After dinner I retired to bed twenty minutes before him. After falling asleep I was awakened by someone kissing the back of my neck and rubbing my legs. I immediately sat upright on my bed and realized that it was Mr. Parker who was doing this to me; this shocked me as I have doubted all the reports by the other female staff that he sexually molested them and now the same was happening to me.

He then asked me that if I wanted I could go over to his bed as the place was hot and he would be outside getting some breeze. I did not want to go but he kept insisting that I move over even telling me that he would lift me over and that the night would end badly in a threatening voice and with an angry look on his face; looked outside to have my worst fear revealed, that the manager of the lodge had picked up his motorcycle and left to go to his home which was about 3 minutes away. Since there were no other persons at the lodge who would've responded to my call for help I decided to cooperate because of the threats he made. I grabbed

my blanket and went to lie on the other bed. I tried hard not to close my eyes but exhaustion took over and I fell asleep. He took advantage of me and began kissing my neck and forcefully rubbed his penis against my legs. Then he began rubbing my breasts; though I tried to push him away he kept coming closer and continued to put his hands between my legs, knowing that I could not scream for help because no one was around I began to beg him to stop and made a dash for the door only to find out that it was locked from the inside with the keys. So I turned around apologized and asked for the room keys. At first he refused to give it to me but then I told him I would be outside taking fresh air for a few minutes and would be back in the room.

Speedily I opened the room door with the keys he gave me and went outside looking around frantically there was still no one else at the lodge so I climbed into a hammock that was in the verandah. This was approximately 3am, he followed me outside and once again tried to touch me between my legs whilst informing me that he was going to lie with me in the hammock; I tried to get out of the hammock quickly which resulted in me hitting my back on a footrest very hard. I began walking around and after sensing how uncomfortable I was and knowing that I would not give up that easily he went into the room and told me he will be waiting. I was in pain and a mark on my skin showed the spot where I hit my back.

I walked around the verandah and the walk way until I heard him snoring. I then went back to the room for about 45 minutes, took a bath then went to the kitchen for breakfast. After the HEYS launching programme was finished we both went back to the lodge for our bags and I was so happy that there were 3 other persons who asked to go to Lethem with us. The trip back home was without incident since he could not say anything to me because there were others in the vehicle.

I received several text messages and Facebook messenger chats which convinced me beyond a shadow of doubt that Carl Parker wanted to have an affair with me. This is something I could not do since his wife is like a mother to me and his daughter, my best friend. Also, I am a young lady who still has the capability, time and will power to explore life but the strong morals that were instilled in me whilst growing and my determination to protect my image assisted me to repel all of his offers. He would tell me in his messages that he would give me more benefits at work and he sees me taking over his position in the future. On several occasions he tried to turn me against my workmates and other leaders in the community who all played a vital part in the region's Development.

In the texts I have as proof that he asked me several times to remain extra days for RDC trips that I took to Georgetown to represent the region and to assist the other officers ; furthermore he offered to give me more advances and to cover for the extra days I was out from work. However all the times I was in Georgetown I would ask my friends to spend the night with me so I could feel safe since he constantly asked if he could spend nights with me in my hotel room. I told him to

stop his behavior numerous times but it kept getting worst. I would constantly remind him about his wife but he would tell me that she is suffering from an illness and that the next woman he supports and has an affair with would preferably have to be a young woman who would live to see that he is buried before her.

During work he would call me into his office to plead with me not to tell anyone about his behavior, and to ask me to consider his offer since he could give me lots of material things. Though I told him to stop he just kept saying that I was a hard nut he was willing to work on. At times he would hold my hands when I brought in reports and was leaving his office and get up to hug me from behind. The situation with the REO's molestation was too much for me and I was beginning to show severe signs of depression. The only two other persons I confided in from the inception and related my story to wished to remain anonymous for fear of victimization but supported me at work by ensuring that I was not left alone in the office or they would wait for me after work and also gave me advice. When I was hurt and crying those persons supported me in every way possible and urged me to remain strong. It is worth mentioning also that recently the REO used one of the same persons to victimize me indirectly and the said individual complied because of fear to hurt someone he knows I love very much. In the end his plan did not work out because of the tremendous support I had and my urge to keep on fighting. I resigned from my job because of the REO Carl Parker's behaviour since I could no longer tolerate it and everyday it was getting worst.

After experiencing all that I mentioned I decided to leave Lethem since this incident has caused me a lot of pain. This caused me and the father of my child who I was living with at the said time to separate because he constantly kept reminding me about the situation and urged me to resign from my job as a result. I has second thoughts about resigning since it was my only source of income that I used to support myself and also to help out family members in need. After a while I could not bear it and even though I was obligated to serve the people of Lethem as Deputy Mayor I left Lethem and began to pursue studies at the university of Guyana. However, after I kept hearing that he was still manifesting his perverted behavior and hurting other women at work and also after persons from the Municipality urged me to return to serve, I decided to come home to Lethem to carry out my duties as Deputy Mayor and Councilor of Constituency 3 to make my contribution for Lethem's Development and to stand up to get justice for myself as well as the other women who the REO sexually harassed at the workplace.

I know many would ask why I took such a long time to report the matter and the truth is when I told my family about the incident because they are family friends with Carl Parker, they wanted me to accept his apology and move on because I was told that "it happens to everybody and people live with it". After losing my family and resigning from my job I just wanted to move far away to grieve and get back on my feet because as humans we have that soft side that breaks down

emotionally especially after being hurt like I was, and I just wanted to isolate myself from everything that reminded me about him.

My family members know that I am telling the truth and most of them support me with whatever I am doing to get justice. The two persons from my family who urged me to accept his apology and move on told me they advised me to do so because his wife is sick and needs his help, and his family suffered a lot through unbearable strife before he became REO. However, I am aware of all that they mentioned but I reiterated that fact that when he was harassing me he did not consider that I was in a relationship and what he was doing was affecting me, he did not consider the fact that he has daughters and would never accept if someone was sexually harassed them and most of all he had no respect for my family who stood by him and always remained supportive throughout his time as REO and even prior to his appointment.

Some may even ask what is it I am hoping to achieve from all of this? The answer is simple, I want justice for myself and all the other women who he molested, especially those who are scared to voice their complaints and fight for themselves. I also do not want to live here to see that he victimizes my loved ones because of me speaking out and I am aware of his plot to remove and hurt the people close to me. But he MUST know that I will never give up this fight because I have evidence and God is on my side as well as people who care and understand that women are not toys for men to use to gain satisfaction; a woman should be able to say NO to a man and he should be able to respect that and not be a pervert.

In conclusion I must say that as a young woman this incident has definitely made me suffer psychologically and break down, but now I am even stronger and prepared to speak out about it and present my evidence so that the entire country knows that Carl Parker did me wrong and has no interest in protecting and motivating our young women and upholding the APNU+AFC promise of a Good life for all Guyanese. He doesn't respect women and it is clearly evident that he victimized and hurt a young woman who has lots of potential to make significant contributions to her country and he had also discouraged me from being further involved in politics because of his behaviour, lies, attack on the Lethem Town Council and victimization of the people around me.

He is making my life very hard and taking out his guilt on the people and organizations I associate with and I can no longer sit back and accept that irrationality. He is causing me to lose hope in the party my family has been with since the Burnham regime and the party I was so confident cared about our youths because I have reported his behaviour and the others who have experienced his wrath have done the same but it seems like we are all being ignored.

If Carl Parker continues to remain here to carry out his absurd activities the progress of our region will be mired since he refuses to cooperate with other officers and I can definitely see that the party will lose many supporters because there are many who are aware of the issue and have stated that they will not be supporting an individual with his character and the APNU+AFC party if it protects him. I know a man is innocent until proven guilty but investigations have begun, letters have been written and evidence have been presented and still to date for 2 months I sit here without any response which is very hurtful and sad.

If the persons who are supporting him had experienced the same thing he did to me I am sure they would think differently and not remain ignorant to the fact that he is a guilty perverted individual, but I say to them that I am fighting so that I can get justice, so that the other women would get justice and the young women who are employed under his leadership would be safe from sexual harassment and not accept it to keep their jobs or for fear of victimization, I am fighting this battle so that that the future of young women in this country will not be hindered because of individuals like Carl Parker.

An official report was made to the police station on the 30th, December, 2016, also a letter was sent to his Excellency President David Granger on the 7th of November, 2016. However, to date I have not received any word from the police concerning the status of the case reported and I have also not received any correspondence or phone call regarding the letter that was sent to HE David Granger and the party I represent.

Attached to this letter are copies of the messages that he sent me.

Yours Respectfully

MAXINE WELCH, JP

DEPUTY MAYOR OF LETHEM

Not signed as sent via email