

Statement on Vicknair

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“NOPD sent a known predatory police officer, Rodney Vicknair, to take Ms. (redacted)’s then 14-year old daughter to the hospital for a rape kit. Beginning in the hospital waiting room and over several months, Officer Vicknair used the badge to gain their trust and gradually destroyed their boundaries. He preyed on a single mother and her young daughter, a rape survivor, by positioning himself as a role model and protective male figure in their lives. He then used that position to create distrust between them, isolating his target from her mother. He escalated from sexualizing the young girl to sexual assault and rape. After Officer Vicknair’s arrest, NOPD Chief Shaun Ferguson called Officer Vicknair “one of our own,” even as he admitted Vicknair’s actions are “reprehensible.” This is why Ms. (redacted)’s claims are also against NOPD and the City of New Orleans. Officer Vicknair is one of NOPD’s own. Officer Vicknair, a resident of Slidell, was employed by NOPD for 13 years and entrusted with training other officers. His actions did not occur in a vacuum. NOPD gave Officer Vicknair the badge, the uniform, and the opportunity. NOPD positioned Rodney Vicknair as a knight in shining armor. His reprehensible actions were only possible because of the position he held with NOPD.

It took great courage for Ms. (redacted) and her young daughter to report this crime. Investigation and trial are often retraumatizing experiences for rape survivors. In this case, Ms. (redacted) and her daughter are shouldering a great burden to make sure Officer Vicknair and the system that made his actions possible are held to account. We are also grateful to the other women in this community who reported Officer Vicknair’s actions – you have helped us create a record of his abusive and predatory behavior. Dr. Philip Stinson, a researcher of police misconduct says he’s become accustomed to hearing his research assistants proclaim during their work, “Oh my God, it’s another 14-year-old.” Research consistently shows that police officers target vulnerable populations, including teenage girls and victims of domestic or sexual violence: https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/how-some-cops-use-the-badge-to-commit-sex-crimes/2018/01/11/5606fb26-eff3-11e7-b390-a36dc3fa2842_story.html. For every sexual assault that makes the news, there are almost always more victims – on average, five more. Not everyone is in a situation where they are comfortable and capable of safely reporting. We appreciate Ms. (redacted), her daughter, and others who take on this burden. They reopen their wounds for us in the hope that the legal system will hold their rapist accountable and stop them from hurting others. These survivors know what it truly means to protect and serve their community.”