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Panelist Biographies

Panel 1

Jennifer Sey

**SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT & CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER,
LEVI STRAUSS & CO. GLOBAL BRANDS**



Jen Sey has been with Levi Strauss & Co. for 21 years, holding a variety of leadership positions within the Marketing, Strategy and Ecommerce teams. In 2013, Jen became the Global Chief Marketing Officer for the Levi's® brand and in 2018 was appointed Senior Vice President & Chief Marketing Officer, Levi Strauss & Co., overseeing marketing for the company's portfolio of brands. She is also a member of the company's global leadership team, which guides the strategic direction for LS&Co.

Jen has received numerous awards, including the distinction of being named one of *AdAge's* Top 40 Marketers Under 40 in 2006, one of *Brand Innovators' Top 50 Women in Marketing* in 2015, *Billboard Magazine's* 'Top 25 Most Powerful People in Music and Fashion', a receiver of the 2018 CMO Social Responsibility Award and she was featured on *Forbes* CMO Next List for 2018: 50 Chief Marketers Who Are Redefining the CMO role. In 2018, under Sey's direction, the Levi's brand was awarded a Silver Cannes Lions award for the "Circles" advertising campaign, and most recently, in

2019, she was named one of Forbes' Most Influential CMOs

As a child, Jen led an intense life of dedication, challenge and competition. She won the U.S. National Gymnastics Championship title in 1986, less than one year after having suffered a devastating injury at the 1985 World Championships. As a result, the U.S. Olympic Committee named her Gymnastics' Athlete of the Year. Jennifer retired after eight years on the national team and went on to study at Stanford University. In 2008, Sey released a memoir, "Chalked Up," a *New York Times* E-Book Best Seller detailing her triumphs and struggles within the world of competitive gymnastics. She has published an Op-Ed in the *New York Times* and her writing has been featured in a variety of outlets as a leading voice in athlete advocacy, seeking to drive cultural and legal changes towards safety and athlete empowerment. In 2020, with the release of "Athlete A", a documentary detailing the abusive culture of cruelty in the sport of gymnastics, Jen added Producer to her list of credits. The film can be viewed on Netflix and inspired a revolution in the sport



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under the hashtag #gymnastalliance, with athletes around the world coming forward to share their stories of abuse in the sport and call for change.

Jen is on the Board of Directors for the Red Tab Foundation, an organization within Levi Strauss & Co. committed to the mission of employees helping employees and retirees in times of need. She also serves on the 49ers Foundation Board, an organization that seeks to empower Bay Area Youth through a collective of innovative and community focused education strategies.

Jen lives in San Francisco, California with her husband, Daniel, and her four children, Virgil, Wyatt, Oscar and Ruth.

Panel 2

Eli Bremer



Eli Bremer (born May 31, 1978) is a modern pentathlete competed for the United States at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China. He finished 22nd overall in the modern pentathlon event. He was born in Hancock, New Hampshire but grew up in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Eli Bremer attended and graduated from the United States Air Force Academy; he is currently a Major in the Air Force Reserves. Additionally, he is the nephew of L. Paul Bremer. He is married to Cami Grebel-Bremer. Eli was a Regional Finalist in the 2008 White House Fellows Program. He also worked as an NBC Olympic Color Commentator in 2004 and 2012. At the 2008 Olympics, Eli wrote a widely read feature blog for USA Today. In 2011, Eli Bremer co-founded Socon Media with business partner Mike Lindley.



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John-Michael Lander



John-Michael Lander is creating a voice. Through writing, speaking, and consulting, he helps individuals and organizations identify the signs of grooming, manipulation, and stigmatizing of sexual abuse and how to help survivors face the past and find their true selves.

John-Michael battled with finding his true self and authentic voice. As an elite athlete, he endured sexual abuse from coaches, medical teams, and benefactors, which resulted in years of PTSD, depression, anxiety, and even suicide attempts.

Today, John-Michael is passionate about helping others face the past and finding their true selves, educating parents, guardians, coaches, teachers, and officials on how to spot and recognize signs of abuse.

John-Michael competed in international springboard and platform diving competitions. His entertainment experiences include performing on General Hospital, All My Children, and national commercials; the lead in the independent films All the Rage and Pilgrim; and originating many roles on New York stages.

He has written the Surface Series: Surface Tension (2018), Cracked Surface (2020), and Broken Surface (pending 2021), depicting his struggles and long-term effects of sexual abuse. His other books are Spandau Ballet (2019) and Life's Beach (2019). He has shared his story "An Athlete's Silence," all over the world.

Panel 3

Larissa Boyce



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Larissa Boyce was a former competitive gymnast currently living in Northern Michigan with her husband of 16 years and her four beautiful children. Larissa earned her Bachelor degree in Kinesiology from Michigan State University. She is a survivor and with her story has advocated nationwide for victims of sexual assault. She was featured in the HBO Documentary “At the Heart of Gold: Inside the USA Gymnastics Scandal.” She has also been a featured speaker at several Law Symposiums and news outlets. In 2018, Larissa along with her Sister Survivors received the ESPY’s Arthur Ashe Courage Award, The Humanitarian Award from The Foundation for Global Sports Development, and Glamour's Women of the Year Award. She also gave her testimony at the State of Michigan House and Legislative committees which helped strengthen the State Laws regarding mandatory reporting, perpetrator sentencing, and increased time for survivors to report assault. Most recently Larissa joined the group RISE to speak at the 2019 United Nations General Assembly with the goal to pass the World Wide Survivor Bill of Rights. She hopes that sharing her own experience will help encourage others to know that they are not alone, there is nothing to be ashamed of, and we have the ability to make a positive impact in the world one voice at a time. Larissa is currently in the planning stages of opening a Michigan based healing retreat center for sexual assault survivors and their families.

Kim Lewallen



Kim Rhodenbaugh Lewallen is a former competitive swimmer who competed in the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles in the 200 meter breaststroke. She continued to stay active in swimming for nearly thirty years as a coach and an instructor. She is a motivational speaker, writer, and the founder of *Freedom Now*, a non-profit organization focusing on bringing hope and encouragement to sexual assault victims. Kim is the author of a new book, *Master of the Mask*. She writes in the Introduction, “. . . I stepped out of the darkness of fear and shame and stepped into the light of freedom that God had for me all along.” Kim married Nolan Lewallen in 2016, and they live near Stephenville, Texas. Together, they have seven grown children and five grandchildren.



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Panel 4

Bob Allard



Robert Allard is a trailblazing attorney who works to protect children by holding accountable institutions that protect sexual predators. He is also an attorney advocate for families whose loved ones have been killed due to negligence. In both cases, helping his clients heal and protecting their financial futures is Mr. Allard's top priority. He's considered one of the nation's top attorneys in "institutional" sexual abuse that occurs in schools, daycare centers, camps and youth sports leagues – all places where groups of children gather on a regular basis.

For his work representing sex abuse victims, he was named California Attorney of the Year in the field of Public Justice. He has also been named the Santa Clara County Trial Attorney of the Year an unprecedented four times. Mr. Allard has also

represented numerous high-profile clients over the years, including the Audrie Pott family of Saratoga, California. Fifteen-year-old Audrie Pott took her life in 2012 after being sexually assaulted by three high school classmates. She was unconscious during the assault and was publicly humiliated on social media afterward. Mr. Allard was an advisor on the award-winning Netflix documentary "Audrie & Daisy" that dealt with the post-assault treatment of sexual assault victims.

The introduction of "Audrie's Law" was another outcome of the Pott case, with Mr. Allard playing a key role in its passage. The law increased penalties and decreased privacy protections for California teens convicted of performing sex acts on a person incapacitated by drugs or alcohol, or who is disabled. Audrie's Law is an example of how Mr. Allard is working at the state level to increase awareness of the childhood sex abuse epidemic. At the local level, he and his team settled a 2017 case for \$8.25 million for three girls who were molested by a fifth-grade teacher. The settlement included a landmark provision that all employees of a Morgan Hill, California school district be trained to identify sexual predators. State Sen. Jim Beall took note of that provision and sought Mr. Allard's advice on a bill that would require all California school districts to train employees to identify sexual predators. "We're doing work that other lawyers aren't doing," Mr. Allard said. "Our cases do not end with a monetary payout. Through these tragic claims, we seek to increase awareness, enact legislation and force policy changes." Mr. Allard and his team also negotiated a \$15 million settlement for five San Jose elementary school students who were abused by their teacher. "Of course, no one can ever go back in time and



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change past events, but money obtained through settlements, awards and verdicts can greatly assist in the healing process by providing financial stability for things such as education, therapy and lapses in employment,” Mr. Allard said. When Mr. Allard learned that a young swimmer’s coach had sexually abused her for years, he continues his battle with USA Swimming to remove predator coaches from the sport. The initial success, including a confidential monetary settlement on behalf of the swimmer, is an important victory because more than 300,000 young swimmers trust that USA Swimming will keep them safe.

On a broader scale, the Corsiglia, McMahon & Allard legal team is credited with forcing the U.S. Olympic Committee to centralize and standardize background checks across all Olympic sports: this alone impacts the safety of an estimated seven million young athletes. Currently, Mr. Allard is part of a nationwide team of attorneys working to achieve justice for the sexual abuse victims of Dr. Richard Strauss. Strauss was an Ohio State doctor who abused at least 177 male students, primarily athletes, during his 20-year tenure beginning in 1979. Mr. Allard is attacking arbitrary laws that remove a sexual abuse victim’s right to sue for their harm. The “Sexual Abuse by Power Accountability Act” is an example of that work. If approved, it would prohibit educational institutions from invoking a statute of limitations if they received Title IX federal funds. Mr. Allard also helped craft pending legislation that would extend California’s statute of limitations for childhood sex abuse victims.

“We’ve seen over and over again that institutions who cover up for and protect sexual predators aren’t held responsible because applicable statutes of limitation periods have expired,” Allard said. “This has to be fixed to take into account characteristics unique to sex abuse victims, including memory repression, disassociation, shame, embarrassment, fear and serious psychological ailments such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety.”

The Corsiglia, McMahon & Allard legal team is led by Mr. Allard and includes veteran civil litigators [Lauren Cerri](#) and [Mark Boskovich](#), retired District Attorney [Ray Mendoza](#), and retired San Jose Police Sergeant Mike Leininger. The team has been honored repeatedly for protecting the rights of sex abuse victims. Mr. Allard, in particular, is called on regularly to provide his insights and expertise to organizations such as the New York Times, the Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, CBS News, CNN, Megyn Kelly Today and all of the San Francisco Bay Area news media.

Mr. Allard received his undergraduate degree from the University of Notre Dame in 1991 and graduated from the University of San Francisco Law School.

Mr. Allard has also developed a reputation in recent years as a caring and skilled advocate for families whose loved ones were killed in trucking accidents. For example, a 2014 trucking accident that killed a man on Highway 17 near Los Gatos, California was caused by faulty brakes. Allard sued the truck owners for negligence and negotiated a \$9.5 million settlement for the victim’s family.



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“This unprecedented settlement included a court order that required the trucking company owners to follow safety laws or risk serious consequences going forward, including jail time and hefty fines,” Allard said. “We insisted that the amount of the settlement be released to send a message to other trucking companies that don’t follow laws on driver regulations and truck inspections.”

Another wrongful death trucking accident resulted in a \$3.75 million settlement for the family of a man who was killed when his truck blew a tire.

“The trucking company failed to conduct a mandatory 90-day inspection on the truck, just two days before the fatal crash,” Mr. Allard said. “If they had conducted the inspection, they would have discovered that the right front tire tread was well below the legal limit and the tire would require replacement before the truck could go on the road again.”

These examples provide only a snapshot of Mr. Allard’s many accomplishments. But perhaps what’s equally important to understand is his dedication to his clients.

“I believe that to give and to serve is our purpose in life,” Mr. Allard said. “That’s why my team and I always strive to enforce laws and policies that protect our children and the generations that follow.”

Terin Humphrey



2003 World Champion

2004 Two-Time Silver Olympic Medalist in the Athens, Greece Olympic Games

- skill named after me called “The Humphrey”
- Two-time Hall of Fame inductee
- First gymnast inducted into Missouri’s State Hall of Fame

Full ride scholarship to the University of Alabama

2005 and 2007 individual NCAA Bar Champion

11 time All American

Police Officer for 4.5 years at Raymore Police Department

Athlete Representative/ Selection Committee for USA

Gymnastics where I assisted in picking the 2012 and 2016 Gold

Medal Olympic Teams

Full time Gymnastics coach for six years and coached a 2018 J.O. National bar and All Around champion

Author of book “In the Middle”

Leotard line from HIGO Apparel called “Terin Humphrey line”



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Now, stay at home mother of an eight month old and going to school to study law and public speaking

Panel 5

Lisa Aguirre



Lisa Aguirre has been involved in the sport of gymnastics for over 40 years. She was Competitive Gymnast for the Flatbush YMCA in Brooklyn New York and then became a Leader for the YMCA. Lisa studied physical education and physical therapy but realized her gift of teaching very early on.

Lisa coached and taught at Nova Gymnastics in Brooklyn for 5 years, San Mateo Gymnastics for 5 years, International Gymnastics for 2 years, Airborne Gymnastics for 10 years and Bay Aerials Gymnastics for over 10 years. She attributes her success to her leadership training from the YMCA at a young age, her coaching experiences at various clubs, and to her husband John.

Learning many lessons from her gymnasts over the years has turned her into a stronger person inside and out. The lessons of being more patient, more compassionate, goal driven, having good time management skills, laughing more and stopping to breathe were all lessons she learned from her athletes. The gifts of leadership and being a great role model came from her gained experiences at each one of the unique Gymnastics schools she has worked at. Her husband John led the way on the business end, making a perfect combination of building the Bay Aerials Culture and Structure, and then combining it with the heart of all of our Bay Aerials teachers, coaches and families.

Lisa has a proven track record of using gymnastics to help children build strong bodies, strong minds, confidence and high self esteem.



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Gail Santamaria

Gail Santamaria, MSW, LCSW is a clinical social worker, sole practitioner and founder of Hope



Rd. Counseling & Consulting. Gail began her career in the school system as a school counselor, special education case manager, and crisis screener. In 2011, after beginning her own family, she transitioned to foster care and adoption work and began assisting children heal from their traumatic wounds with an attachment, relationship-focused approach. Gail observed firsthand how stable, permanent connections are paramount for healing and overall success in life. In 2015, Gail began

providing child and family therapy and continues to specialize in therapeutic services with children, teens, and young adults, which also includes parent coaching. Her work is centered on helping her clientele understand and heal from their past, create deep and meaningful connections, improve their current coping skills to better manage stress, and overcome behaviors that are holding them back.

Gail is passionate in her advocacy for child safety in sports which primarily stems from her history as a competitive gymnast with an emotionally abusive coach. When she's not busy being a parent of two athletes (one gymnast) of her own, Gail provides emotional therapeutic support for athletes utilizing her trauma-focused expertise. These experiences, both as an athlete and as a child mental health professional, afford her the opportunity to educate and advocate for healthier, more effective coaching of young athletes. More importantly, Gail strives to usher in a culture



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change aimed primarily at empowering the voice of the athlete, through parent and athlete education.

Gail earned a bachelor's degree in social work from Monmouth University in 2001 and a master's degree in social work from Fordham University in New York City in 2002. She has received post graduate training in attachment, adoption, and play therapy. Gail uses a combination of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR), Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) and Theraplay, and has earned a designation as a Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) Practitioner and educator. Gail is also a certified Trauma Competent Professional with Lakeside Global Institute. Her calm presence and deep compassion help her clients resolve deep wounds and face great fears.

Ann Kolasa



I, Ann Kolasa, wife, mother, business owner, coach and leader. I have been coaching gymnasts for thirty consecutive years. I have coached pre school aged gymnasts to international elite athletes. I have aided and celebrating the many milestones of so many of young women. I have assisted dozens of athletes to college gymnastics scholarships. I have coached many champions at state, regional and national competitions. I have coached and taken the first Bahamian gymnast to the World Championships. I view myself as instrumental and important to the journey a child takes into adulthood. I aspire to influence lives through the sport gymnastics that I love. I aim to be a part of improved culture and the future of our sport.



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Panel 6

United States Senator Richard Blumenthal

Originally sworn in on January 5, 2011, Richard Blumenthal is serving his second term as a United States Senator from the State of Connecticut.



Senator Blumenthal served an unprecedented five terms as Connecticut's Attorney General, fighting for people against large and powerful special interests. His aggressive law enforcement for consumer protection, environmental stewardship, labor rights, and personal privacy has helped reshape the role of state attorneys general nationwide, and resulted in the recovery of hundreds of millions of dollars for Connecticut taxpayers and consumers each year.

A key player in the national fight against Big Tobacco, he helped bring an end to deceptive marketing aimed at children – a victory significantly lowering youth smoking rates, and compelling a multi-billion dollar settlement for Connecticut taxpayers. He also helped lead a coalition of all 50 states that culminated in historic agreements with social networking sites to better protect children from Internet predators.

As Attorney General, he advocated for reforms in the health insurance industry to assure critical health care coverage and lower pharmaceutical drug prices. He has worked relentlessly to eradicate corruption in state government and make state contracting accountable, fair, honest, and transparent.

His vigorous investigation and legal action against insurance industry abuses has successfully forced financial restitution and reform, compelled greater disclosure by insurers and brokers to consumers, and recovered millions of dollars for the state, municipalities, and individuals. He has successfully fought unfair utility rate charges, air pollution causing acid rain, general environmental wrongdoing, as well as a wide array of consumer scams and frauds.

Senator Blumenthal has personally argued several major cases in court, including his successful effort to uphold the Connecticut sex offender registry in the Supreme Court. He has fought and sued the federal government for failing to follow or enforce environmental laws and energy statutes, as well as imposing multimillion dollar unfunded mandates on local taxpayers under the



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No Child Left Behind Act.

From 1977 to 1981, Senator Blumenthal served as a U.S. Attorney for Connecticut, prosecuting drug trafficking, organized and white collar crime, civil rights violations, consumer fraud, and environmental pollution. He served in the Connecticut House of Representatives from 1984 to 1987, and the Connecticut State Senate from 1987 to 1990. As a volunteer attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Senator Blumenthal saved the life of an innocent, wrongly convicted death row inmate who came within hours of execution.

Prior to his position as U.S. Attorney, Senator Blumenthal also served as Administrative Assistant to U.S. Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff, aide to former U.S. Senator Daniel P. Moynihan when Moynihan was Assistant to the President of the United States, and law clerk to Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun.

Senator Blumenthal graduated from Harvard College (Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude), and Yale Law School, where he was Editor-in-Chief of the Yale Law Journal. From 1970 to 1976 he served in the United States Marine Corps Reserves, and was honorably discharged with the rank of Sergeant.

Senator Blumenthal lives in Connecticut with his wife, Cynthia, and their four children.

Stephanie Dallam, RN, MSN, PHD



Ms. Dallam is a former researcher for the Leadership Council on Child Abuse & Interpersonal Violence, a nonprofit organization that seeks to disseminate high quality scientific research concerning the prevalence and consequences of child abuse and other forms of interpersonal violence in the general population. She is a former clinical instructor for the Family Nurse Practitioner Program, School of Nursing, University of Missouri. She also worked as a Nurse Practitioner in the Department of Pediatric Surgery and Trauma at the University of Missouri Hospitals and Clinics. She has authored numerous articles, reports, and book chapters and conducted presentations at a number of professional meetings on childhood maltreatment and its aftermath.



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Alyssa Beckerman

This is an open letter Alyssa wrote to her UCLA coach that provides important information about her background.



Open letter to Mrs. Valorie Kondos Field,

First of all, I am very aware of the sheer amount of anger this will potentially generate. All I can say is, I appreciate that people had good experiences. I just can't say the same personally. I wish I could. And that's on how Miss Val chose to treat me. She's aware of how I feel. This isn't *my* truth, it's just simply *the* truth.

There were many issues as a gymnast. Eating disorders, injuries, silence, and a broken system running the show. For the sake of keeping this shorter, I will focus on the most important issue: Silence.

When I was 11-13, I had a very good coach. I would get done with a routine or a skill and he would ask, "What were you thinking about when you did this skill?" In his gym, this was never a rhetorical question, and he wasn't angry. In fact, he never got angry, never even raised his voice. He expected us to speak. He expected us to think for ourselves, to build conscious awareness of our gymnastics and to communicate this. To him, this communication was more important than gymnastics. We were never allowed to speak in anger or frustration. We had to calmly assess everything. I've coached with him recently, and I'm still amazed at how well spoken even his six year old group was. Back then, after he severely injured his neck, he recommended a gym for me and told me to go after my dreams. He still stayed as my mentor for many years.

Fast forward 5 years:

I deferred a year before going to college to train for the 2000 Olympics. I signed with UCLA in 1999. That year, I was at Cincinnati Gymnastics Academy with Mary Lee Tracy. There were many aspects of her coaching style that were abusive and I've spoken about them publicly before. To put things lightly, Mary Lee and I clashed on several issues. A big one for her was that I spoke out loud, and no matter how politely I said it, the fact that I had the gall to speak at all was seen as disrespectful. I was 18. Mary Lee had no problem letting people know I was "difficult." Once, a brevet judge came to the gym for a mock meet and she was giving us



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corrections. She gave me a correction on vault, and I nodded in response and said, “ok”. The brevet judge looked at me and said, “Oh. I see what she meant now with that attitude!” (???)

Before signing to UCLA, my mom and I told Miss Val that I would speak up about things. She dotingly thought this was wonderful. It was the first glimmer of hope I’d had in years. After 1999 Worlds, Miss Val called my mom to warn her that Mary Lee was speaking very poorly of me. After the 1999 World Trials coverage, the abusive situation was almost spilling over onto national tv. Miss Val suggested I might need to go to another gym. I considered it very seriously. However, I knew that leaving would only make her trash talking worse, and she would seek to ruin me, like she already did to others who left her gym. So, for better or worse, I stayed. That following year, I know I made what I did despite my coach. She just did not want me to succeed. We were treated like garbage in Sydney. Once I was done with my “duty” as alternate, I spoke to Kathy Kelly, the Women’s Program Director for USAG at the time. I told her I wouldn’t treat a dog the way they had treated us. It was in one ear and out the other.

In short, I was coming into freshman year with a lot of fresh scars. I flew from Sydney, Australia to Los Angeles and started classes at UCLA the following day. There was no time to process what happened in Sydney. I was suddenly on the UCLA gymnastics team, back at practice that day. The depression hit at once. A few of my Olympic and national team teammates were there with me, and I remember walking to our first practice, one girl saying with longing, “Four more years until we’re done.” What we had been through, with the camps at the Karoly Ranch, and in Sydney, was the disappointment and nightmare of our lives. Recovering from that gripped us all differently. I remember days sitting on the PT table icing after practice, just feeling miserable, like I had a hole in my chest and a permanent lump in my throat. I wanted to hide under a rock. I hated my body too. Miss Val told me I never had to look that starved ever again. It gave me hope. I knew I had an eating issue from Mary Lee, and I knew I would need to gain some weight. However, when I finally ate normal food, my body seemed to gain double and I matured. I filled out, and it wouldn’t go away. Coming down off of heavy anti-inflammatories, I felt the pain that was masked. My wrist was also completely shot. It was broken a year earlier, and it never healed. I tried to swing bars, but I could barely hold a toothbrush. Pulling my hair back for practice was painful. I tried to hold out, but I knew I needed surgery and I finally made the decision to have it. During a team meeting, our bar coach Randy expressed his disappointment in my decision to have surgery. I told him it was just time. I had held out for as long as I could, but it had been broken for over a year and I was ready to not be in pain anymore.

After the surgery, the surgeon told my parents it was “like a bomb had gone off in there”. They had to scrape away all the necrotic tissue and put in a bone graft from my hip bone and a metal screw.



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Towards the end of that year, one of my walk-on teammates came to me in tears. She said she was going to have a meeting with Miss Val and she thought she might get kicked off the team. She pleaded with me to help her. I was at a loss as to what I could do to help. She was not making the lineup, but she had such a positive energy in practice, it helped me remember why it was fun again. So I coached her on how to speak during the meeting. I gave her pointers such as, look her in the eye when speaking, take the time to carefully consider her words before speaking, and we went through a list of her good qualities as an asset to the team for her to say. I gave her a hug and wished her well.

The following day, she called me to say she was kicked off the team. She thanked me for my help, and also said Miss Val had complimented her on her presence of mind during the meeting, to which my teammate responded, “Oh, Alyssa helped me.”

I walked into practice, and a team meeting was called instead. Miss Val started by saying, “I’ve made the decision that it’s in her best interest for this gymnast to not be on the team. What do you all think of my decision? Let’s go around the room.” I thought to myself, this was inappropriate to do. She was the head coach, and this decision had nothing to do with us. I watched in horror as each and every friend and teammate said, “Yeah, she needs this.” or “She should be off the team.” When it got around to me, I took a deep breath and calmly said, “I disagree. I think she has a great attitude and was an asset to the team.” You could hear a pin drop, but the first reaction in that room was Miss Val, “Well that’s just SAD!” spat out with vitriol. The entire room erupted at this. The whole team was yelling over each other to say, “No Alyssa you just don’t understand.” I said, “I understood, and I just disagree.” One teammate spoke up and addressed the room with, “Well I, for one, *respect* Miss Val and *respect* her decisions.” I replied, “I respect Miss Val, and I can also disagree.” At this comment, the whole room got quiet again, girls were whispering and it irritated Miss Val to the point she finally said, “What?” A teammate asked, “Can we do that? Can we respect someone and still disagree with them?” Miss Val rolled her eyes and conceded, “Yes.” After that meeting, entitled the Jerry Springer meeting, the theme of “agreeing to disagree” was born. Miss Val told me she would not renew my scholarship until the fall. She said I could come back if I wanted to. A small red flag went up in my mind.

Sophomore year, 9/11 happened. I had been living in the NYU dorms that summer while taking classes and working just a few weeks prior. My hometown is Middletown, New Jersey. 9/11 had an impact at home. Middletown ended up having the most fatalities in a town after New York City. Miss Val had a banner made, and when I went home for break, she gave it to me and I went to ground zero and hung the UCLA gymnastics banner up on the perimeter among thousands of others. We dedicated our season to the victims of that tragedy. Later that year, I was active on the UCLA student athlete council, and eventually became chairman. I made first team all American on beam. I saw the season through to the end. It wasn’t the best season, but it was the



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first time back from surgery and I was competing on beam and floor. It was the only year Miss Val couldn't justify dangling my scholarship and holding it until the fall to see what happens. From pre-season training of my junior year, the nightmare really began. We were doing exercises in Venice beach. It was 30 different stations and then a sprint to the ocean. It took some time to get used to what exercise belonged to each station. There were coaches at certain stations to spot for different exercises. However, with my wrist, there were positions I avoided post-op. I still made a fist in a handstand. It took me a bit to figure out what exercise they wanted and then find a substitute exercise for those particular stations, on the hard pavement. By the 3rd day, I finally had it down. But on that 3rd and final day of this, Miss Val upped the stakes, and said if the whole team gets under a certain time, we could add an extra "personal day". Personal days were something where we could take off a day from practice, no questions asked. This was a big deal. We were extra motivated. However, we suddenly had a different coach doing the spotting that day. So when I got to his station, I didn't have time to explain fully, I just said, "I can't do this," and dropped to do a different exercise in its stead.

Years later, a teammate called me to apologize for her part in what came next, but this is why I know how this went down.

Miss Val had called her and that sub coach into her office and said, "Beckerman must have cheated." She then asked them to accuse me of cheating. She called in the seniors, and told them to hold a team meeting with just the gymnasts, to get me to confess.

I was completely oblivious as I walked into this meeting with just the teammates and no coaches. We had never held a meeting this way before. We were there for over two hours while the seniors talked about this alleged cheater and how disappointed, disgusted they were in this person. We went around the room, and I explained that I did different exercises because of my wrist, taking me longer to get a handle on the modified route the first few times through, but that seemed to go right past them. The meeting ended with no result. I walked out of there bewildered. Out of paranoia, I asked one of the seniors afterward, that they didn't mistakenly think it was me. She answered, "Yes, it was you. Go talk to Miss Val about it." I was floored. We wasted over two hours over someone's mistake. I marched straight to Miss Val's office and said this was an unnecessary witch hunt. She didn't seem to care. No apologies were made with the mistake, and she seemed to be perfectly at ease that I was just put through 2 hours of aggression from the entire team, only to realize it was all aimed at me. The teammate (who Miss Val put up to accuse me) was standing in the room as well. I remember telling her, I hold no animosity towards you. Miss Val then had a kick out of making fun of me for using an SAT word. (Isn't this college?)

This was just pre-season and Miss Val had already manipulated the team to ostracize me. On the first anniversary of 9/11, CNN was featuring my hometown and I had a hard time ending a phone



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call with a very upset former classmate from home. I was a minute late to the lineup that day. Miss Val pulled me aside and said, “It was a year ago. Get over it.”

By the time we were competing in Hawaii over New Years, things had really become transparent. I was sitting at a New Year’s Eve dinner with the team and a team from Oregon. Some parents from the Oregon team traveled as well, and they sat with me and asked about my elite gymnastics experience. It was the first time I spoke out loud about it. I told them about Mary Lee’s methods, the eating disorders, the issues in the sport. I spoke about Bela and Martha, and USAG. I even talked about how Miss Val had warned me about Mary Lee. I had seen Miss Val hovering around the periphery as I spoke to these parents. In telling them the story, I felt a surge of gratitude for her, that she had protected me once, and that I was finally able to say this out loud. It was a big moment for me, to speak the truth about what happened, even if it was just to two parents at a New Years dinner. I had butterflies in my stomach just saying it. When we got done talking, I got up and stood next to Miss Val, who had been listening. I gave her a friendly nudge with my elbow and she jerked and shook me off like I was an irritant. She then spoke with complete disapproval, that I had a lot of nerve to stand next to her after the things I said. To be honest, this is one of the only times in my life where I could not recall her specific words after that. I knew there was a face and tone of disgust, I knew it was the exact nightmare reaction you’d never wish to have after finding the courage to speak about abusive coaching. I remember the look of sheer disgust on her face, and after her tirade I remember stumbling off and running outside the venue. I ended up in a dark corridor off a street outside the restaurant sobbing in tears on the phone to my older brother. I couldn’t tell him, even seconds afterward, all that she had said specifically, but the intent to harm was crystal clear. I remember being so confused that I could not completely recall something that had just happened. I learned later that this was normal for trauma victims. I cried into the phone, “Why does this keep happening?! Why do I have to go through this again?!” I vaguely remember fireworks going off in the background. Apparently the count down to the New Year had happened but I didn’t care. At that moment, all the misery of the fall season, all the pieces came together. She wanted me off the team, and she hated me.

A few weeks later I had a meeting with Miss Val, where she made a point to let me know that she was on friendly terms with Mary Lee again. She knew what impact it had to say this to me, and she made a point of it. She also made a point in telling me that gymnastics might not be good for me anymore. In other words, she had decided on her strategy, and it was to make me so miserable that I would voluntarily quit.

At an away meet in Arizona, she told me she was taking me out of the floor lineup. My teammate was a far better tumbler than I was, and she had just come back and was ready to compete floor, so this made sense to me. However, Miss Val never let go of an opportunity. She



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told me the real reason was that I was overweight and I would injure myself. Apparently, this reasoning did not include beam, where I was the anchor. I sat out of the one touch and Miss Val walked over and asked me why I wasn't warming up. I said that if I'm too fat to tumble, I might also injure myself doing beam. She hesitantly said no, and asked me to compete on beam. I did the angriest beam routine of my life, nailed it and walked away.

Every interaction I had with Miss Val, I was treated with indifference, derision, or hostility. She also influenced teammates to make fun of me. I had teammates "jokingly" talking about who could kick my ass in a fight, goading it, like we were on a playground. It hurt. I cared about my teammates, and Miss Val knew it. Miss Val would call me a "locker room lawyer", which was said with utter disgust.

After I dislocated my kneecap at an away meet in Michigan, I had knee surgery, and she took steps to ensure that I would be pushed out. She would always have a limited budget in who could travel with the team. Those that traveled would "earn it" over others. So, naturally I wasn't worthy. I paid my way to sit in the stands and watch my team at NCAA's. On crutches. By the end of the year, she told the team not to talk to me. My own roommates wouldn't talk to me either. I was depressed and alone. I rehabbed my knee at school. By the end of the year, she told me she would not be renewing my scholarship. She would wait and see how I looked in the fall. At first I was training at Woodward west. But after being warned that Miss Val was checking in on me, not in a good way, I flew home and trained in New Jersey. It was there, isolated from that environment, I was able to truly enjoy gymnastics again. At the end of the summer, a few days before flying back to LA, I got a call from the teammate I was supposed to be getting an apartment with, saying that Miss Val told her she couldn't room with me. When I flew back for pre-season, I had nowhere to live. Thankfully, my great aunt took me in at the last minute until I could find a single apartment. This all happened while I was "trying out" for the team again. I was doing half routines on bars, I was tumbling and I was vaulting again. I felt good about my training. I should have known that none of it mattered.

I walked into my meeting with Miss Val and Chris Waller was there as well. Miss Val said they've decided not to renew my scholarship. I said I had demonstrated half routines already and that I was much stronger, etc. She waited until I was done and said, "Well, I guess we're just... agreeing to disagree," she said with relish, melodically ending on a high note. I got quiet after that. It was right then, that I realized how long she had held onto that grudge from that meeting. I remember her keenly watching my face for that realization to happen. Chris was new to UCLA as a coach, and was not present for that freshman year meeting, so he had no idea what significance that statement held. As I stayed quiet, various things flitted through my mind. I remembered in the past, hearing how Miss Val would brag about how other girls sobbed and begged when they were kicked off the team. I swore to myself right then that I wouldn't give her that satisfaction. I remained quiet. Miss Val eventually asked, "Well, do you have anything to say to me? Like F-you or thank you?" I couldn't believe it. This was how she was ending my



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entire career. She was also inviting me to curse her out, which was really odd, and I thought maybe she thinks I'll take the bait. So after some thought, I took a shaking breath and said, "No I'm pretty neutral right now. The f-you side of me would say, talk to my lawyer, and the thank you side of me would say thank you for the three years prior." Then I walked out and quietly went to pieces in the hallway.

It was too late to transfer at this point. It was late September of my senior year. She wouldn't just let me finish out my senior year with the team. Not even as support. This was my punishment. She ended my career on her terms, with disrespect and an F-you, all for the sake of her own petty vendetta.

Today, I find it quite amazing how she can now blog about the horrors of Martha ostracizing teammates. I have to give her credit here. Miss Val certainly knows which way the wind is blowing. Same thing with 9/11. A very useful PR tool, until it wasn't. And back when I was first finding my voice, speaking out about abusive coaching on that New Year's Eve, the code of silencing athletes to protect fellow coaches and USAG was still the rule of the day. From my perspective, the goal of her methods were to shut me up and shut me down. Maybe she thought I'd be so miserable that I'd just go die somewhere quietly. But I'm still here Miss Val, and you can't erase me. Teaming up again with Mary Lee won't work anymore either. It only tells me you are still a bully, using provocation as a form of control.

This is an example of the handiwork when adult coaches make psychologically unsound choices on behalf of their own egos. It was never about the athlete. It had zero to do with gymnastics. Neither of these women actually cared about what their self serving agendas would do to me as a human being. The real sad part is, no matter how messed up the situation gets, there's always that part of the athlete that wants their coach to approve of them. This really messes a gymnast up, because abusive coaching will lead you to believe that your successes or failures directly reflect your worth as a person. I was lucky that I had a small circle of teammates on the fringe that understood, and said out loud, what we went through was abuse. They were my lifeline. They still are. I was lucky to have a supportive family, and supportive coaches from earlier in my career that reminded me they were proud, and that I was not the problem. It has taken me many years, only until recently, to decide to give that notion any credence.

Panel 7



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Trinea Gonczar



Trinea Gonczar is a survivor and advocate for victims of sexual abuse and all who are impacted as a result. She is a former gymnast from Lansing and is a survivor of the disgraced doctor Larry Nassar., Trinea was featured in the HBO documentary "At the Heart of Gold: Inside the USA Gymnastics Scandal". Trinea currently serves as the Director of Development at Wayne County SAFE (Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners program) in Detroit, Michigan, the same program that processed the thousands of undetected rape kits for the City of Detroit.

Trinea found WC SAFE as she explored options for other survivors in her case as she recognized even on such a public stage, there were minimal resources for survivors.

Trinea was featured on the NPR podcast "Believed" as well as the Audible book "Twisted". She was selected as part of the speaker panel "Sister Survivors Round table" on ESPN. Trinea speaks nationally about her experience and has received numerous accolades, including the Arthur Ashe Award at the ESPY's and carried on to name her first child, Ashton (Ashe) in honor of the courage award of the year. She received the humanitarian award from Global Sports Development and received the Humura award from the EDJA foundation. Trinea is on Michigan State University's Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Advisory Board and served as a co-curator for the Finding Our Voice exhibit at the Michigan State University Museum.

Trinea is a tireless champion and advocate for sexual abuse victims and all those that are impacted.

She has a bachelor's degree from Columbia College Chicago.



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Dawn Homer

Trinea Gonczar's mother

Dawn Homer is the Vice President of Medical Management Systems of Michigan, a medical billing company. In Lansing, MI. She started this company with two of her 7 other siblings. Dawn. Comes from a medical family with her paternal grandfather and father being MD's. Her paternal grandmother was a nurse and so was her mother. She has been around. Physicians all her life. Dawn is a mother to 3 girls, and a grandmother of 5 grandchildren. She is an avid marathon runner and has completed several marathons to date. Dawn is a survivor of multiple autoimmune disorders including lupus, hashimotos disease, and adult onset Type 1 diabetes.

