

*Women Veterans Military Moral
Injury Conference*



Research. Recovery. Resources

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WOMEN VETERANS MILITARY MORAL INJURY CONFERENCE 2020
Empowering Lives After Military Sexual Assault and Moral Injury

Robbins, N.C., January 20, 2020 – The Moral Injury Support Network for Servicewomen, Inc. (MISNS), Women Veterans Social Justice Network (WVSJ), and Leashes of Valor non-profit agencies joined forces to offer two Women Veterans Military Moral Injury Conferences in 2020. The initial two-day event takes place on Thursday and Friday, 26-27 March 2020 at the College of Charleston, Charleston, S.C. A second conference is scheduled for 14-15 May 2020 at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Va.

The conference will provide support and resources to women Veterans for healing from Moral Injury and taking back their lives. "Our goal is not only to provide information that will help women go from just surviving to thriving, but also educate chaplains, civilian clergy and community health providers. Many faith leaders do not understand what Moral Injury means from a woman's perspective. Moral Injury is thought of as something that happens to men in combat, but for women, Moral Injury is most often the result of acts by fellow military members, such as sexual assault, hazing, discrimination, and even physical violence," said Dr. Roberts.

In the era of the 'Me Too' movement, military servicewomen have mostly gone unacknowledged. Women who served in the military are expected to be strong and powerful. Seeking assistance for Military Sexual Trauma (MST) or Moral Injury could be perceived as a sign of weakness by others. Many of these women suffer for years prior to seeking treatment and their daily lives are an uphill battle of survival.

The conference aims to promote a dialogue between women Veterans, VA chaplains, civilian clergy and community health providers on how to support and heal the effects of Moral Injury. Participants will have an opportunity to tell their stories, encounter mind/body practitioners, share PTSD and mental health findings, and learn healing and coping mechanisms. The packed two-day agenda includes workshops on self-love, journaling, yoga, meditation and prayer, MST and community support, planning military faith communities or Veteran ministries, military and women veteran suicide risks, soul injury and much more.

Military Veteran and Deacon, Karen Gordon, stated, "I understand both sides of the problem. As an MST survivor, I would like to meet other women that understand the why and

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how I feel. As a Deacon, I can share what I needed from my clergy and didn't receive. I can explain to other faith providers how a positive response might have changed my outcome."

One of the founders, Dr. Daniel Roberts served over 17 years as a Religious Affairs Specialist in the Army and saw firsthand the effects of MST. He now co-leads research on Moral Injury in female Veterans. Roberts states, "The stories women have told me are tragic. They joined the military to serve their country, gain new skills, and continue their family's legacy of service. Instead, they were harmed by the people who were supposed to have their back." The research shows 80% of participants interviewed experienced some form of sexual trauma while on active duty. One survivor declared, "pretty much everyone I know is a sexual assault survivor."

Conservative estimates suggest that 20% of women Veterans experienced MST, but this number does not account for the 80% of unreported assaults. Servicewomen who experienced MST or Moral Injury in the military are more likely to suffer from homelessness, drug abuse, and suicide.

Currently, women account for approximately 10% of the Veteran homeless population and the number increases yearly. The 2019 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report states women Veteran suicide deaths jumped from 254 in 2016 to 296 in 2017 with 40% of them being between the ages of 35 and 54. Women Veterans are twice as likely to commit suicide than female civilian counterparts.

Registration for the conference is \$50. Sponsors and donations are needed to defray the cost of the event and provide travel scholarships for Veterans with limited funds. Sponsorship levels of range from \$500-\$10,000 and in-kind donations of goods and items. Sponsorship benefits include exhibitor space, company logo in program books, advertising on web pages, luncheon tickets, and opportunities to present your organization at the conference.

For more information about the conference, contact Dr. Daniel Roberts at MISNS at (910) 690-5964 or via email at droberts@chaplainconsultants.com, or Dr. Christiane O'Hara, WVSJ, at ; (404) 538-4470 or via email at christianeohara@wvsjnetwork.org.

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Moral Injury Support Network for Servicewomen, Inc. <https://www.chaplainconsultants.com/>

Women Veterans Social Justice Network <https://www.facebook.com/4wvsj>

Leashes of Valor <https://leashesofvalor.org/>