

SPRING/SUMMER 2004

Connections

A BI-ANNUAL PUBLICATION OF THE WASHINGTON COALITION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAMS



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Speaking Out: Faith Communities And Sexual Assault

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A PERPETRATOR? CAN'T BE!

IT CAN HAPPEN TO THE DAUGHTERS OF KINGS

OUR SEASON TO DEAL WITH "WHAT'S AILING US"

EXPLORING COMPLEX AND IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES AND COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

Spring | Summer 2004

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Renee M. Sparks

Director's Desk

I have been working on eradicating sexual violence for some years now, and a member of the faith community for over 29 years.

Some of the most remarkable people that have crossed my path have been people of faith. I can travel through the chambers of my mind to 1797 when Isabella Baumfree came into this world and spoke only Dutch until she was ten years old. The pages of her journey ventured from childhood to motherhood to a courageous battle to sue for the freedom of her child who had been illegally sold.

Isabella said, "When I left the house of bondage I left everything behind, I wa'nt goin' to keep nothin... so I went to the Lord and asked him to give me a new name and the Lord gave me Sojourner...and I told the Lord I wanted another name cause everybody else had two names; and the Lord gave me Truth, because I was to declare the truth to the people." And it was Sojourner Truth that paused on the path of the abolitionist, Frederick Douglas, when he was most discouraged and his burden was heavy. She asked him one question, "Frederick, is God dead?"

For believers and communities of faith the answer to Sojourner's question is, "No, God is not dead;" and victims, survivors, and those who labor to eradicate sexual violence recognize that neither is sexual assault dead. It raises its vicious and ugly head even in communities of faith. Yes indeed, sexual assault victims, survivors, and perpetrators are seated in the pews, synagogues, temples, mosques, worship grounds, and altars of various communities of faith because they live, move and have their being amongst us.

This issue moved me in a traditional and non traditional approach in seeking multiple voices within communities of faith. While in flight from D.C. to Denver, I presumed the well-dressed gentleman seated next to me was a Rabbi. I wanted to engage him in a conversation about communities of faith, faith initiatives, and a hopeful opportunity of learning and not self defining how to better partner with communities of faith.

I said, "Sir, I hate to disturb you, but are you a Rabbi?" Nodding slightly he said, "Yes." I introduced myself, and shared the topic of this issue. I expressed the need for this issue to reflect various voices of communities of faith. He hesitated, slightly looked at me, then responded diplomatically, "I'm not the one who can best address this subject; my work is more in the aspect of education." I presumed he was uncomfortable with the subject, therefore, I politely responded, "Thank you for your honesty." Afterwards an invisible wall of silence distanced our closeness as he began to read and I began to write. It was less than ten minutes before Barry, the Rabbi, turned toward me, introduced himself, and that invisible wall of silence was dismantled as we talked in depth until we reached our destination.

The purpose of this issue is take a leap of faith to dismantle walls that can possibly hinder, and allow sexual assault service programs and communities of faith to find common thread to bridge effective partnerships, and collaborate in braving together to build awareness, empower victims, and give voice to survivors by extending borders for the sole purpose of the eradication of sexual assault in all communities inclusive of communities of faith.

"Yes indeed, sexual assault victims, survivors, and perpetrators are seated in the pews, synagogues, temples, mosques, worship grounds, and altars of various communities of faith because they live, move and have their being amongst us."

It is not possible for this issue to capture the more than 3000 communities of faith that exist worldwide, but we did capture voices of communities of faith that represent the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Native Americans, and members of the faith community that are also members of the disability population.

Members of communities of faith and those who work in the field to end sexual assault have a responsibility to go beyond biases, traditions, and philosophies because the storms and raging tidal waves of sexual assault are not respecters of persons or faith. We can't wait until that storm or tidal wave hits too close for comfort. Our concern is not only our homes, but also our neighbors' homes, near and far, whomever those neighbors might be.

No matter where people are in their faith walk, sexual violence is a human issue and no community is exempt. Many survivors are members of congregations. It is important that sexual assault programs begin to understand that many victims that are members of communities of faith not only walk through the experience, pain and trauma, but also the process of healing through their choice of faith. Faith communities are comfortable talking about the tenets of their faith but not about something as subjective in their minds as sexual assault. We must have the difficult discussions. And hopefully, the dialogue will paint a reality of the relevance of the base knowledge that sexual assault programs provide.

A couple of things took place during the process of this publication. The first was I parked my car and proceeded to walk to a familiar facility. I noticed a young boy of color that appeared to be thirteen or fourteen years old. I noticed he was walking very fast. Minutes after walking in the facility my attention diverted to a conversation between the young boy and a middle-aged lady who was at the front desk. The boy had an accent and was clearly quite upset. He asked the lady to please call "The police, I have been mugged." The lady responded, "Get out of here, I'm not calling no police." The boy said, "What is wrong with you, lady?" My eyes captured the eyes of another person who worked in that facility. Her eyes voiced empathy for the boy; but neither she nor I verbalized a response. She stared at the situation from the distance, but clearly could not overrule the comments of the lady, who once again said in a stern and unconcerned voice, "Get out of here."

As the boy left, the lady turned to me replacing the sternness with the politeness of, "How are you today?" The boy came back in and asked, "What is the address here?" The lady yelled, "I told you to get away from here." I walked outside and a gentleman was allowing the boy to use his cell phone. I asked the boy was he okay. I then told him the name of the street so that he could give that information to the police. The gentleman told me that he was going to stay with the boy and I left. But what also left with me were lingering thoughts about how sometimes people don't want to get involved for whatever reason, but that doesn't necessarily make it right. That young boy reached out for help, but in the process of reaching out he was re-victimized. I wonder how that lady would have responded if it had been her 13 or 14 year old son or grandson or the son of someone that she cherished. It is irrelevant that it wasn't her son, or my son. He was somebody's son and that should have made all the difference.

"Members of communities of faith and those who work in the field to end sexual assault have a responsibility to go beyond biases, traditions, and philosophies because the storms and raging tidal waves of sexual assault are not respecters of persons or faith."

I then thought about sexual assault and how talking about sexual assault makes people feel outside of their comfort zone and, as a result, the victim is often times re-victimized. The article included in this issue titled, “Our Season to Deal with What’s Ailing Us” also talks about the conspiracy of silence. We need unified voices of communities of faith to speak up and speak out to assist in breaking the “conspiracy of silence.”

The second thing that was brought to my attention in the process of compiling this issue was that I had asked another dear friend and sister in the faith to write an article because many years ago she shared with me the trauma and impact of sexual assault that she experienced as a child. I also knew her process of healing that evolved through faith. She was unable to write the article because there was death in her family. Her cousin, a 20 year old junior in college majoring in forensic science had recently gotten her first apartment. Someone broke into her apartment about 3:00 a.m., sexually assaulted, kidnapped, bound her hands and pushed her into a lake.

Her body surfaced three days later on her birthday. The college she attended honored her with a scholarship in her name, the news broadcasts flashed her pictures across their networks, law enforcement apprehended a person who consistently denies that he did it, and hundreds of young people flocked to her funeral. It can’t be said any clearer. Sexual assault are no respecters of persons. We must respect and understand that communities of faith bring much value to our efforts in eradicating sexual assault because it broadens our territory and allows partnership and collaborations that is empowering to both communities of faith and our efforts towards ending sexual violence. Therefore, we must “Outreach to Communities of Faith,” “Explore Complex and Important Relationships,” “Engage Faith-Based Groups and Organizations,” and “Deal with What’s Ailing Us.” To do so is to go to where hurting people are.

RENEE M. SPARKS
ADVOCACY EDUCATION DIRECTOR

DEEP WITHIN



(Copyright 1996 by Angela Glaude-Hosch) Angela Glaude-Hosch currently resides in Atlanta. She is a graduate of Spelman College and Troy State University where she received a B.A. in Psychology (Pre-medicine) and a Masters in Public Administration (M.P.A.). With fifteen years of government service, she is currently a Visual Information Specialist with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Angela is an author, performer, and speaker. Angela has performed in the stage plays, "Headphones," and "I Know the Man." As a motivational speaker, she has also conducted motivational workshops at both Emory University and Spelman College. Angela views herself as a work in progress and seeks desperately to give back to the space she occupies as she continues to use her God-given talents.

DEEP WITHIN THE CRUCIBLE OF MY SOUL

At the very core of my being
There is a living and all-powerful force
Protecting me from the evil forces
Sent to besiege and to destroy my spirit

I have been touched by tarnished hands,
Yet I've remained untouched.

I have been seen with unwanted eyes,
Yet I've remained unseen.

I have heard the sound of words
Which were destructively piercing to the ear,
Yet I only hear the essence of my beauty being expressed.

The tinge of filth has been poured upon me
Yet I've remained as fresh as a blossoming flower.

I have tasted the bitterness of abuse,
Yet my tongue continues to utter
Sweet words of praises
To the unyielding...Everlasting...All-Encompassing
God within me.

This strength prevails because
The inner eye sees not like the outer
The inner ear hears not like the outer
The inner nose smells not like the outer
And the inner mouth tastes nor speaks like the outer.

I have been victimized and by many I've been despised
But in the words of Maya Angelou
I say to them, "STILL I'LL RISE."

I'll rise because there is a secret place
Deep within the crucible of my soul
A place of safety and refuge
A place of tranquility and peace
A place of harmony
And a place of unconditional love!

DEEP, DEEP WITHIN THE CRUCIBLE OF MY SOUL!



Lydia Guy

Sexual Violence Prevention: Community Collaborations in Faith Communities

BY LYDIA GUY
PREVENTION SERVICES DIRECTOR, WCSAP

There has been increasing public interest in Faith Based Initiatives focused on sexual violence within the past five years. This phenomenon can be attributed to a variety of causes including, but not limited to, emphasis on faith based interventions from funding sources and increased media coverage of sexual abuse cases within religious communities. This focus on creating new faith based initiatives make the inaccurate assumption that rape crisis centers, churches, synagogues, mosques and other places of worship have never addressed the issue, sexual violence, singularly or collaboratively. The reality is that this work has and will also continue to be done.

In 2002 the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs in collaboration with the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence convened a series of interfaith dialogues focused on naming sexual violence from a faith perspective, community accountability and the role of faith communities in sexual violence prevention. This article draws heavily from the publication, *Creating Partnerships with Faith Communities to End Sexual Violence* which was the end result of the process.

Why Partner with Faith Communities?

Sexual Assault Resource Centers tend to be secular institutions. Given this fact there can be the assumption that secular and religious organizations cannot work together without compromising the fundamental ethics and morals of both. This isn't necessarily the case. Sexual violence is physical, emotional, social, economic, cultural, spiritual and/or political acts and/or behaviors that use sex and/or sexuality as tools of violence and oppression. Given this definition of sexual violence it is entirely possible that faith communities and sexual assault programs can find common ground. Faith communities by definition encourage their members to evaluate their motivations, thoughts and actions against moral and/or ethical standards.

A few reasons to engage in meaningful partnership with faith communities:

- Faith communities are important community institutions that can effect positive change and make a difference in people's lives.
- Faith communities often provide local leadership on social issues. Ending sexual violence and promoting the wellbeing of and justice for all women, children and men may be a part of their mission.
- Faith communities typically represent a cross-section of the community and can provide a wide range of perspectives, ages, and life experiences.
- The organizational structures of faith communities are often conducive to establishing a partnership. Faith communities often have identifiable leaders, committees and groups with which you can partner.
- Religious leaders are often trusted members of the community and a partnership can strengthen counseling skills when they learn about survivor issues related to sexual abuse.

“This focus on creating new faith based initiative makes the inaccurate assumption that rape crisis centers, churches, synagogues, mosques and other places of worship have never addressed the issue, sexual violence, singularly or collaboratively. The reality is that this work has and will also continue to be done.”

What about Philosophical Differences?

Faith communities are like any other community in that they represent a wide range of political and theological belief systems. These may or may not be in direct conflict with the policies and philosophies of your agency. Although we may all be committed to the eradication of sexual violence we may have different theories about the root causes of sexual violence and appropriate strategies to address the issue. Managing differences in philosophy is integral in any true collaboration.

The first step to managing conflict is to understand your own biases and to identify your own core beliefs. Listed below are some common issues on which faith communities and sexual assault programs may have different beliefs. It is important for each sexual assault program to determine their own philosophical stance prior to engaging with communities which may have different philosophies.

- Differences in belief systems regarding accountability of perpetrators, forgiveness and reunification.
- Traditional gender roles
- Access and/or utilization of contraceptive and abortion services
- Full inclusion of the Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual and Transgendered individuals and communities
- Sexual abstinence prior to marriage

The next step is to initiate a conversation to find out the belief system of the potential partners. In facilitating a community process it is beneficial for sexual assault programs to be proactive in sharing their own values and belief. This facilitates the process of finding common ground. It is also integral to encourage faith communities to share their beliefs with you. It is also important that we take the time to truly listen. We often make assumptions regarding the beliefs and values of others. Unexamined biases can undermine any attempt to engage in a successful partnership. Identifying areas of disagreement as well as areas of commonalities is important. The value of partnerships is that they leverage the strengths of different communities, not that all communities have the same thoughts and beliefs.

The final step is determining whether enough commonality exists and whether commitment exists to engage in continuing dialogue about the differences. Faith communities are extremely diverse. They run the gamut of perspectives, political persuasions and theologies. In any partnership it is important that the partners have a base level of trust and comfort in working with one another. It is unreasonable to expect that every interaction between a sexual assault program with a faith community will result in a collaborative project.

Conclusion

The challenges and reward of partnering with faith communities are the same as partnering with any other community. Social service agencies, including sexual assault programs, will need to create new partnerships and nurture existing ones in order to end sexual violence. Ending sexual violence will require creating social change. Social change will require changing the fundamental components of our society. Faith communities are a fundamental component of society.

“Faith communities are like any other community, in that they represent a wide range of political and theological belief systems.”

“...there can be the assumption that secular and religious organizations cannot work together without compromising the fundamental ethics and morals of both. This isn't necessarily the case.”

“Unexamined biases can undermine any attempt to engage in a successful partnership.”

Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence is now known as the FaithTrust Institute

Publication available online at www.wcsap.org.

Washington State Sexual Assault Prevention Advisory Committee 1997 excerpted from Creating Partnerships with Faith Communities to End Sexual Violence, Cynthia Okayama Dopke, WCSAP 2002

Shelter Me



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“Shelter Me” is an adaptation of Hashkiveynu, a Jewish prayer which is part of the liturgy for evening worship. Hashkiveynu is a petition to God for protection through the night and its dangers. In it, we ask God to spread over us a sukkat shalom, a shelter of peace, and that we might find refuge in the shadow of God’s wings. This poem was printed on FaithTrust Institute Website. Reprint Permission was granted by FaithTrust Institute.

*Rabbi Cindy G. Enger
Director of the Jewish Program*

Rabbi Cindy G. Enger completed her rabbinical education at Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. She is an attorney, with previous experience representing children in abuse and neglect proceedings.

Help me, dear God,
To lie down at night in peace
And waken me to life renewed.

It is not the darkness outside in the night sky that I fear
But the waiting space
Of silence
Inside this place
In which I dwell.
My house is not a shelter of peace.

Shelter me
With your sukkat shalom
Please
Shelter me.

Help me, dear God,
To lie down this night in peace
And lift me up to life renewed.

The shadow of your wings,
Might they really replace
this valley of death where I’ve walked alone?
Oh, guard me as I journey
to an open place, a sacred space
Where I feel safe and whole – at home.

Shelter me
With your sukkat shalom
Please
Shelter me now
Please.



Evelyn Larsen

Outreach to Communities of Faith: One Coalition's Story

BY EVELYN LARSEN, ORGANIZATIONAL SERVICES COORDINATOR
WASHINGTON COALITION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAMS

Faith. Religion. Spirituality. Certainly all are important aspects of well being and human fulfillment for many people. All of these serve as guiding tools; they dictate behavior and give us religious holidays and traditions. For many people faith is an overall significant facet of everyday life. In working to end sexual violence in our communities we must incorporate faith communities and enlist them as allies in our fight. Leaders of religious communities are in a very powerful position that is entrusted and empowered by society as a whole. The benefits of partnering with faith communities are tremendous and the education they receive from understanding our movement will increase their ability to serve their membership.

Arlinda Harris, Community Outreach Educator, from the New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) is making an attempt to establish partners in religious communities. Below are the details of Ms. Harris' project and how she is working to gain a foothold in communities of faith within her county. The very least she hopes to accomplish is to increase the knowledge of sexual violence in these institutions as she attempts to bring them on-line as full allies in the movement.

Ms. Harris started her project by compiling a county wide data base of all churches, synagogues, temples, mosques and any other faith based organizations. She did this by doing an internet search for the county she was targeting. Once she had that information she sent each organization a letter, which included an introduction of the project, what the New Jersey Coalition is, what they do and how they can assist communities of faith. She also included a questionnaire asking specific questions about their knowledge of sexual assault, whether they addressed this issue in their congregations, and if a workshop was offered would they be interested in attending. She sent out approximately 3000 letters and received about 600 responses and felt that was an exceptional return on her inquiry. Most respondents indicated that they thought the coalition was doing wonderful work and would be interested in hearing about training opportunities but were reluctant to commit to anything specific. Her next step was to contact all leaders who showed interest and initiate a collaborative relationship. She was met with rejection by most of whom she made the overture due to perceived time constraints. Ms. Harris' response was to offer to come to them and visit, which was generally well received although many simply wanted a general visit and did not want to get into any significant part of the issue. It became apparent to her that there was room for vague conversations regarding rape but not much room for discussion about the role of the faith community in perpetuating or stopping sexual violence. She did feel that it was a first step to building an initial relationship which could then foster collaboration on more significant activities.

“The benefits of partnering with faith communities are tremendous and the education they receive from understanding our movement will increase their ability to serve their membership.”

(continued)

“We are not without allies in the faith communities but need to foster many more in many different faiths.”

The end learning of her project was the recognition that those of us working to end sexual violence will continue to fight myths and stereotypes which are well entrenched in many faith communities. We are not without allies in the faith communities but need to foster many more in many different faiths. At the time of the writing of this article Ms. Harris reported that she had three churches that she was currently working with in direct conjunction with sexual violence. She also presented at five churches either during a regular church service or at a designated service about coalition work. She did indicate that she found that if she had an inside contact at a faith community she had a much better chance of acceptance and was in a better position to receive an invitation to visit that particular community. It is her hope that people in the faith based community will take a stand, look at the facts, and begin to take an active part in the healing process of so many who come through the doors looking for an answer. It is a mission of her heart and she is committed to breaking down the barriers that prohibit our faith leaders in addressing this issue.

MS. HARRIS' NEXT UNDERTAKING WILL BE A HANDBOOK FOR CLERGY THAT WILL INCLUDE ARTICLES SUCH AS: [“THE FIRST STEP IN HEALING VICTIMS”](#), [“WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE”](#), [“HOW BIG A PROBLEM IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE”](#), AS WELL AS MYTHS ABOUT VICTIMS, NEW JERSEY STATISTICS AND [“WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE DISCLOSES.”](#) THERE WILL ALSO BE ARTICLES THAT INCLUDE ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS OF FORGIVENESS. COPIES WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE BY THE END OF THE SUMMER OF 2004, AND CAN BE OBTAINED SHORTLY AFTER BY EMAILING AHARRIS@NJCASA.ORG. IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE SPECIFIC INFORMATION REGARDING THIS PROJECT OR IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS YOU MAY CONTACT ARLINDA HARRIS AT (609) 631-4450 EXT. 202 OR EMAIL AT AHARRIS@NJCASA.ORG.



Advocating for the Native American Victim of Spiritual Abuse: Promoting Healing, Harmony and Understanding Between Races and Nations

This article is excerpted from a project supported by Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking: Prevention and Intervention Programs in Native American Communities, a project supported by Grant No. 2001-WT-BX-K005, awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of View in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. Copyright © 2001 Native American Circle, Ltd. Reprint permission granted by author, Jo Hally.

Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking have in common, among other issues, questions on their minds and hearts that are entirely spiritual in nature. Anyone who survives an abusive relationship or a criminal assault, whether perpetrated by an intimate partner, an acquaintance or stranger, whether male or female, young or old, will typically ask, “Why did this happen to me?” Quite naturally, this question leads to other questions of an increasingly spiritual nature, such as: “If God exists, why would he allow me to have suffered the way I did?” or “Is God angry with me?” “Does he hate me?” “Is he punishing me for something I did (or didn’t) do?”

These questions are not specific to any particular race, ethnicity, cultural or sub-cultural group, but rather are “universal”—felt in common by every victim of crime. The differences in the response to these universal questions are rooted, however, in the victim’s race, culture and value system—or put differently, in the victim’s own particular set of spiritual convictions and beliefs, and cultural values. Likewise, the response will be as unique as the individual who experiences the crime.

For American Indian and Alaska Native women, representing two separate minorities, both indigenous and female, the spiritual issues that arise may be multiple—even layered—since the victim may have endured spiritual abuse from her intimate partner, as well as spiritual abuse in the form of cultural oppression, targeted at race, culture and tradition. Again, the forms of abuse may be as varied and unique as the individual who endured such abuse.

For instance, one Native woman might describe how her intimate partner distorted Biblical scripture to maintain power and control over her. She might describe how, when she sought assistance and counsel from a member of Christian clergy or some other leader in her church, she was re-victimized by advice that she behave more “submissively,” or that she simply “pray harder.” In either of these forms of spiritual abuse, the American Indian or Alaska Native woman may have many common experiences with other abuse victims who have no Native ancestry at all.

But when we begin to delve deeper, moving back through time and history to examine the role of certain European beliefs and policies surrounding the exploration of “foreign” lands, we often find the shameful evidence of repressive public policies, rooted in philosophies of racism and religious prejudice, that are even today imbedded in our nation’s Congressional Acts and U.S. Supreme Court decisions which form the foundation of what we refer to as “Indian law” (as opposed to “tribal law”). And in this instance, no other race or ethnic group in America today other than American Indian and Alaska Native peoples can claim to completely identify with or understand spiritual abuse at this specific level.

“If God exists, why would he allow me to have suffered the way I did?” or “Is God angry with me?” “Does he hate me?” “Is he punishing me for something I did (or didn’t) do?”

“Today, indigenous people are speaking out about the abuse they have survived, visited upon American Indian and Alaska Native people by members of the “dominant society” or “dominant culture”

We must also consider the American Indian or Alaska Native woman who tells of how she was taken from her parents as a young child and placed in a boarding school operated by the federal government or a religious sect, or she may talk about how she was “sent through the system” by being placed in a series of foster homes with non-Native children or non-Native foster parents. An indigenous woman who has suffered through this type of childhood might detail how her cultural heritage and her sense of who she was as a person was systematically attacked in the school or foster home. She may speak of how those in power over her insisted that she forget her Native language, dress, customs, ceremonies, songs and dances. She may describe being coerced to adopt a language and customs or “spiritual values” that were foreign to her.

Worse yet, the woman may have experienced physical abuse, sexual assault or one or more forms of sexual abuse in the school or foster home. As a child, she certainly experienced such abuse feeling that she was powerless to prevent or escape what was happening to her. And as a Native American child, she may have been led to believe that she had no value as a person simply as a consequence of her race and that she should not expect—or feel worthy of—better treatment than that which she was receiving. Many Native women relate painful memories of being told that they were nothing more than an “Indian squaw” and were expected to submit passively to the sexual abuse of those in power over them.

Today, indigenous people are speaking out about the abuse they have survived, visited upon American Indian and Alaska Native people by members of the “dominant society” or “dominant culture”—about forced acculturation and assimilation, prejudice and racism, about feelings of low self-esteem and personal value that led, inevitably, toward a pattern or cycle of self-destructive behaviors, such as alcoholism or drug addiction. Still, the abuse suffered and the response to that abuse will be uniquely individual, no matter that other victims may have endured abuse similar to that which the victim describes or that may be perceived by “outsiders” as “common incidents or forms of abuse.” To dispel the notion that certain types of abuse are experienced in similar ways by all Indian people, one has only to hear the individual speak of the abuse and the feelings the abuse generated in her.

One may say, “I was taken from my People and I was raised outside my culture. Now I know nothing of my People’s traditions or culture, and I feel ashamed.” Another may say, “I was raised outside my Native culture and I became a Christian. I still practice Christianity, but some of my People say I cannot be both Native and Christian too—that I must choose to be one or the other. If I choose to be Christian, I can no longer claim to be Indian.” Still another may say, “I was raised outside my Native culture and became a Christian. I forgot my Native language. I never learned my People’s traditions. Now many of my own People will not accept me.” They say I am an “apple,” red on the outside and white on the inside. Yet the white people won’t accept me either because my physical appearance tells them that I am an Indian woman. So....who will accept me as I am. Who will love me now?”

The headlines in our nation’s newspapers speak of sexual abuse perpetrated on children by religious leaders. What are rarely heard about outside “Indian country,” though, are the self-proclaimed traditional healers or spiritual leaders who hide behind a cloak of spiritual righteousness, morality and falsified, “pretend” traditions to lure the unsuspecting victim into fake ceremonies or compromising situations where they can be sexually assaulted or abused. Yet there are numerous other forms of spiritual abuse that have not been exposed—abuses that are only rarely discussed openly. In Indian country nationally,

cultural taboos and tradition are often cited as reasons to shun the open discussion of that which is unspeakable, traditionally unacceptable, and sadly, for the victim, unforgettable. Shame, blame and secrecy fertilize a spirit's soil so that torturous memories may be nurtured in isolated anguish and bitter self-reproach.

Even issues of prejudice and racism, among Native American people themselves, prevent the discussion of these multiple forms of abuse of the spirit—abuse that is often perpetrated by Indian people upon other Indian people. Consider, for instance, the manner in which many indigenous people define “Indianness.” Is our racial and ethnic heritage to be defined according to the possession of a tribal role card? Shall we base our definition upon how many Native traditional “cultural events” one attends each year? Or should we define our heritage based upon physical appearance so that one whose skin is fair or whose hair is blonde or red, whose eyes are blue, cannot claim their Native heritage, even when it exists? Or in contrast, shall we say that one cannot claim Native blood if their appearance is normally recognized as consisting of African-American heritage?

Shall we go one step further and suggest that one cannot possess American Indian or Alaska Native blood if their spiritual path is not a Native traditional path? Too many Native people who do not possess a physical appearance readily identified as American Indian or Alaska Native can attest to the emotional pain they have felt at being categorized as a “split feather.” Too white to be Indian; too Indian to be white. And what of those part-blood Native persons, split-feathers and all who have chosen a spiritual path of Christianity only to be told that their choice is meaningless and purposeless for “half-breeds don't go to heaven?” Why should such cruelties and spiritual abuse, rooted in racism and prejudice, be allowed to exist or flourish in any culture, Native or non-Native?

A person's spirituality is the very core of who they are and what they believe about themselves and the world around them. In our shelters and crisis centers, these topics frequently come up, yet few advocates are prepared to engage in a discussion that will ultimately test their own spiritual convictions, as well as those of victims. Typically, crisis center directors warn their advocates and staff who work directly with battered women, “Don't discuss religious, spiritual or faith-based topics with victims!”

This stance is common, for too often experience has proven that to risk engaging in dialogue about the “spiritual” is to risk disturbing the harmony of the shelter environment since these types of discussions are commonly incredibly volatile. Typically, it is felt that these discussions can only lead to problems within the shelter community because each person, whether advocate or victim, will hold their own convictions on spiritual issues and that spiritual value system will guide and shape the thoughts, emotions and actions of each person. The potential for clashing on the topic is enormous, perhaps arguably certain, particularly when a non-Native advocate who embraces a Christian philosophy determines to attempt to “convert” a Native victim, or when a non-Native advocate fails to comprehend why it is that a Native victim feels the need to spend her Saturday night engaged in a traditional healing ceremony, rather than attending a church on Sunday morning.

“We forbid our advocates to discuss faith persuasions with our shelter residents,” some directors say. “We feel it is best to leave the spiritual counseling and guidance to the religious leaders in the community. If a victim wants to discuss spiritual issues, we tell our advocates to refer her to her church or her spiritual counselor. Advocates just aren't trained to handle such issues.”

“A person's spirituality is the very core of who they are and what they believe about themselves and the world around them.”

But indeed, why not? Why trust religious or faith-based spiritual leaders or counselors to provide the emotional support and wise counsel that will help the victim find her own path to personal healing? Why aren't advocates trained to deal with spiritual abuse issues, particularly when we recognize that many spiritual leaders know nothing of the dynamics of intimate partner violence and that the potential for their advice to re-victimize the victim is incredibly high?

Prior to Euro-American colonization, American Indian and Alaska Native people had long embraced a "holistic" approach to healing, whether emotional, physical, mental or spiritual. In most tribal cultures, for a person to be returned to full harmony with himself or herself, with his/her people, and his/her world, all four "parts" of the individual were necessarily addressed in healing ceremonies. Likened to the four directions in the oral history of many tribal cultures, the four essential elements of "being"—body, mind, emotions and spirit—were not separated and treated as independent parts of a person, but rather, were addressed as one. When indigenous people today speak of "returning to tradition," essentially they are speaking of returning to a holistic approach to healing.

“Likened to the four directions in the oral history of many tribal cultures, the four essential elements of “being”—body, mind, emotions and spirit—were not separated and treated as independent parts of a person, but rather, were addressed as one.”

Those who advocate for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking should likewise be fearless in speaking out against spiritual abuse, just as we speak out against other forms of abuse, such as emotional, mental, verbal, financial, and physical abuse. When we speak out about the role domestic and sexual violence—as well as the role cultural oppression—has played in perpetuating abuse of the spirit, the individual's personal path to healing becomes visible.

As with every other form of advocacy for victims of abuse, we as activists and advocates should rise to the challenge of recognizing that opening the dialogue about spiritual abuse should not be treated as a taboo topic, to remain strictly within the domain of spiritual leaders, healers and counselors. Rather, the same rules that govern basic advocacy for victims should govern our approach to the topic of spiritual abuse. We must recognize, quite simply that: (1) abuse is experienced uniquely and individually; (2) we are there, in the honored position of listening to the victim's shared life experiences, affirming her basic rights to human dignity, and freedom from fear and oppression; (3) we do not have "answers," but can only provide "options;" and (4) we must always support the individual's right to make his or her own personal choices. Choices, after all, are the very root of the individual's spirituality, and spirituality embodies the very essence of what is required to heal a broken heart.

Finally, as advocates, we must realize and anticipate that our willingness to “break silence” and share our own “spirit” with others will require us to take emotional risks, daring to be vulnerable and expose our own hearts. Still, when we acknowledge the power of the spiritual to negatively or positively impact the lives of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking, we honor survivors and those who help victims to survive. More importantly, by breaking silence on the topic of spiritual abuse in all its varied, often insidious forms, we dare to take our movement to end domestic and sexual violence to an entirely new level—one that may promote peace among nations and races, build bridges of understanding and communication, and not surprisingly, perhaps, provide us as advocates, with healing, too.

JO HALLY IS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NATIVE AMERICAN CIRCLE, LTD. (NAC), A NON-PROFIT, 501(c)3 TAX EXEMPT CORPORATION ESTABLISHED FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING VICTIM ADVOCACY, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR URBAN AND TRIBAL NATION PROGRAMS PROVIDING SERVICES TO AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT AND STALKING. WITH A GRANT FROM THE OFFICE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (OVW), OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE IN FY2001, NAC WAS FUNDED TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS TO BENEFIT NATIVE VICTIMS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE. THE STALKING RESOURCE CENTER, A PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME (NCVC), IS COLLABORATOR IN NAC'S OVW "STALKING INITIATIVE" GRANT OBJECTIVES. JO IS ALSO CURRENTLY WORKING ON AN OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME (OVC)-FUNDED PROJECT AS A CONSULTANT FOR NCVC'S VICTIM ADVOCACY TRAINING ON-LINE PROJECT AND NCVC'S VICTIM LAW PROJECT. JO WROTE THE FIRST EDITION OF THE NAC HANDBOOK CONCERNING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT AND STALKING CRIMES IN NATIVE COMMUNITIES, WHICH CAN BE ACCESSED ON THE NATIVE AMERICAN CIRCLE WEB SITE AT WWW.NATIVEAMERICANCIRCLE.ORG. THE STALKING RESOURCE CENTER'S NEWSLETTER, VOLUME 2, NUMBER 2 (SUMMER 2002), FEATURED AN ARTICLE WRITTEN BY JO, ENTITLED [ADDRESSING STALKING CRIMES IN NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES](#). JO HAS ALSO SERVED AS A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR THE BLACK CHURCH AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INSTITUTE. SHE IS OF CHOCTAW/CHEROKEE DESCENT AND IS ADOPTED TO THE WARE FAMILY, KIOWA TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA. SHE IS AN ENROLLED MEMBER OF THE Tsalagi NvDagi Nation.



Carol Washington Mizoguchi

Our Season to Deal with “What’s Ailing Us”

CAROL WASHINGTON MIZOGUCHI
COORDINATOR OF WOMEN’S PROGRAM WITH KING COUNTY

So, I get this call from a dear friend and sister in the ministry urging me to share my perspective on sexual abuse and the faith community. I am resistant at first, mainly because I don’t feel that I have much to say and second what I have to offer is simply my opinion. I struggled with the approach, would I write about my own experience as a survivor of sexual abuse? Or would I try and give voice to what I often refer to as a conspiracy of silence? Would I talk about sexism in the pulpit and how it breeds sexual abuse and oppression? The subject is so important and because the church has not examined it, the approach for discussion is wide open.

After much prayer and meditation I decided that the best way to start the conversation was from the perspective of reconciliation and healing.

The Bible proclaims, “What the enemy meant for evil, God will use for good.” It also says, “To everything there is a season.” Perhaps this is our season to deal with what ails us. Let me put that statement in the proper cultural context. African American mothers and grandmothers have been known for decades to brush our hair and while they are brushing they ask that question, “child what is ailing you?” I love African American people and I write this truly from a place of love.

According to a recent article entitled “Diocese releases numbers on abusive priest” dated February 20, 2004 in The Providence Journal, roughly 4 percent of the 1,200 diocesan and religious-order priests who served in ministry here since January 1950 were alleged to have sexually abused minors. This is not the time to point a finger at the Catholic Church, but a grand opportunity for all denominations to further address the issues of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct.

What can the African American church do to create a safety zone for victims of sexual abuse? (I can only talk about my community because that is my perspective, my experience). The steps, however, are applicable to most communities of faith wanting to address the issue.

How does the church serve as an instrument to healing? How do we create a safe space for honest dialogue, on a subject that has remained in the closet for way too long? Not speaking out on the subject of sexual abuse and misconduct hurts both victim and predator. In fact the entire body (the church) is harmed by this conspiracy of silence. Silence blocks God’s grace. Silences allow the enemy to condemn and destroy. Silence works to destroy relationships and the fulfillment of God’s promises for our lives. Silence does not make way for healing or freedom. Jesus came to set the captives free, so let’s begin this journey to freedom.

So what is the first step in creating safe space? The most obvious is breaking the silence. How do we break the silence?

According to FBI statistics in the United States, 1.3 women are raped every minute. That result in 78 rapes each hour, 1872 rapes each day, 56,160 rapes each month, and 683,280 rapes each year. Research suggests that one in four women and one in six men have reported being sexually abused during his or her childhood. Reason would tell

“As a community we need to partner with the sexual assault community and learn about the impact abuse has on victims so that we can better serve the needs of those that have been harmed.”

us that some of these men and women are members of our congregations, serving as pastors, ministers, ushers, trustees and deacons.

On any given Sunday morning be assured that you can find a sermon on “Jesus the great liberator.” What’s amazing to me is that we rarely if ever hear about sermons that cover the sin of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct. We must begin the dialogue, we must have the conversations. The Bible instructs “us to be not ignorant to the tricks and schemes’ of the enemy.” Silence on the issue of sexual abuse and misconduct is the tool of the enemy. Sexual abuse leaves scars and bitterness for years to come. We cannot protect against or prevent or even heal for that matter if we refuse to talk and acknowledge that there is an issue.

Another step the faith community can take is to develop spiritual support groups for victims of sexual abuse. This has great importance in the healing and recovery process. Often support groups are left to the secular world and our spiritual needs are not dealt with. I remember as a victim of sexual abuse feeling somehow that God had betrayed me. Trying to reconcile my physical and my spiritual healing was very difficult. I was referred to an African American therapist and it was helpful to a degree because she could relate to some of the cultural issues, however it failed to help me deal with the spiritual crisis I was facing.

Thirdly, it is important for the church to create partnerships with secular organizations that possess expertise in the area of sexual abuse and victimization. Many seminaries and theological training centers fail to teach on sexual abuse and trauma. Much research has been done on the impact of trauma on development and relationships, however, those of us in ministry have not always been privy to this base of knowledge. As a community we need to partner with the sexual assault community and learn about the impact abuse has on victims so that we can better serve the needs of those that have been harmed. In our learning we need to teach those in the secular about the importance of spirituality and faith in the healing process.

Finally we need to expand our system of accountability. Dealing with sexual abuse accountability for the most part has been left up to the criminal justice system. What happens when the perpetrator never reaches the criminal justice system? What happens when victims choose not to report?

Often the abuser and the victim try to “tune out” the spiritual aspects involved, but this is not entirely possible and one will succeed only in deadening their conscience to spiritual truth. Guilt and fear of being found out tampers with the inner spiritual core. The scars from this kind of involvement are ugly, deep and long- lasting. God cares too much for us (all of His children) to leave such tampering and spiritual abuse unpunished. So, yes God will hold those accountable for the sin, but what responsibility does the church have in holding one accountable?

True healing and wholeness will not take place if we do not create social supports for victims and those that perpetuate sexual abuse and sexual misconduct. In addition to

creating a place for victims to feel safe to say that they have been violated, we also need to make it safe for perpetrators to get help without being scrutinized and ostracized from our community.

We must address the things that work to keep us in bondage. For complete healing in our community we must be honest about that which ails us. Jesus came to give us life and that more abundantly, shame, pain and denial works to keep us from fulfilling a life of utter abundance. Addressing this issue in our churches is the pathway to freedom; freedom is the pathway to abundant life. The word tells us “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

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Wanda Washington©

It can happen to the daughters of Kings...

When considering the approach we take today within the Jewish community in dealing with sexual offenses and how totally ineffective it truly is, I also considered whether the approach prevalent is outside our very traditions. The following are some very brief and hastily written thoughts on the subject meant more to stimulate discussion than to be definitive statements.

We spend so much time and effort dealing with things quietly to protect the reputations of the abusers and their families that we've lost sight of the very wickedness of the crime and our responsibilities in taking action and speaking out.

Has it always been this way? The answer is no. There was a time when we had leadership, a Sanhedrin, a Kingship, Judges, Prophets and even at times a direct relationship with God when we had the Temple. What did this leadership do when a prominent member of the community sexually abused? Did they speak of the lack of witnesses and the need for proof? Did they speak about all the good the abuser did during their life? Did they speak of the need to protect the abuser's family from the shame of their child's wickedness? Were things dealt with quietly? Was the abuser quietly moved to another city to start again with a clean slate? Was Shmirat Ha'Lashon put above the protection of others? Did we ask after each crime whether it was a mere single incident?

I believe the answer to all of the questions above is simple: NO.

One of the earliest recorded cases of rape within the Jewish community is that of the rape of Tamar the daughter of King David by her half-brother Amnon. Was the incident involving one of the most prominent families in the Jewish community (at both that specific time and all time as well) hushed-up? No.

Tamar took ashes and put them on her head and tore the garment of fine wool that she wore. She did this publicly. The King's daughter publicized her rape. Why? According to R'Yehoshua ben Korchah by publicizing what had happened to her she raised a great barrier at that time to prevent further assaults of this nature. It was said if such a horrible thing could happen to the daughters of Kings, certainly it could happen to any regular girl. If such a thing could happen to a modest girl like Tamar, it could happen to immodest girls as well.

This public act by Tamar raised the awareness of sexual assault to the general community and this awareness helped protect other women. Did the reaction end there?

No. The Rabbinical community took action as well. They instituted a Rabbinical decree at the time prohibiting certain seclusions to further protect women.

So, I ask the question, why don't our leaders act similarly? I understand we don't have a Sanhedrin, a Kingship, Judges or Prophets. How more we have the need today for both leadership and actions by our leaders.

How many will suffer before our leaders act? How prominent must the victim be and how publicly must they humiliate themselves before we are finally moved to act decisively?

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The Awareness Center is the Jewish Coalition Against Sexual Abuse/Assault (JCASA).
JCASA are dedicated to addressing Incest and other forms of Childhood Sexual Abuse in
Jewish Communities Around the World*



Rev. Dr. Marie M. Fortune

Peace, Peace, When there is no Peace

BY REV. DR. MARIE M. FORTUNE

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus speaks to his disciples: "Stumbling blocks are sure to come; but woe to him by whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung round his neck and he were cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble." (17:1-2) The institution of the Roman Catholic Church has been the stumbling block that has not only caused great harm to children and their families, but also has denied them the compassion and justice they deserve. Jesus was realistic and he did not hesitate to condemn those who, directly or indirectly, cause harm to the "little ones."

There is nothing new here. The problem of sexual abuse of children and adults by clergy surfaced clearly in the mid-80's in Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Buddhist settings.

If the Roman Catholic Church (or any other denomination) had been serious then about addressing child sexual abuse by its clergy, it would have sent a letter or brochure to its members saying "if you believe you were sexually abused by a priest, please contact us. We want to help you and we want to insure that this priest does not harm anyone else. Please call 1-800-XXX-XXXX."

It would have immediately suspended any priest against whom an allegation was made pending an investigation. It would have immediately reported allegations of child abuse to the civil authorities who are best equipped to investigate and, if appropriate, file criminal charges when children are involved.

Then it would have spent its millions of dollars providing therapy and support for survivors and increased oversight of priests rather than employing lawyers to try to find ways to avoid liability, keep the secrets and manage the media.

It would not have relied on clinicians to adjudicate complaints, i.e. to determine whether abuse had occurred. It would have relied on investigations to determine, "did this priest sexually abuse this person?" If so, it would have acted to remove him from future access to vulnerable people ---permanently.

It would have established an advisory commission made up of experts in sexual abuse by professionals against adults and children including non-Catholics to advise them on what steps to take to insure that no other priest is in a position to harm his parishioners. And it would have implemented the recommendations of this commission.

By these actions, the church would have saved its own soul and sustained its credibility with its people and the public. In other words, it would have said clearly, "we didn't know we had a problem, but now we do. And we do everything in our power to protect our people from those among us who are the cause of this devastating harm."

Instead it responded to the earliest complaints with stonewalling, cover-up, and

"Stumbling blocks are sure to come; but woe to him by whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung round his neck and he were cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble."

very short-sighted sense of institutional self-interest --- doing what the prophet Jeremiah warned about: "...and from prophet to priest, every one deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace." (6:13-14)

Whether through misdirected pragmatism (a shortage of priests) or sheer stupidity, pedophile priests were simply reassigned or sent off for treatment and then reassigned. The majority of clinicians have said from the beginning that child molesters cannot be cured. At best they can be managed but they should never again be in a position of responsibility for children or youth.

So now the price will be much higher. The Church's stewardship of its resources has been tragic. Vital programs in every diocese will suffer because resources are being diverted to pay the legal fees of lawyers and the settlement of deserving survivors.

No one is exempt. This crisis in the Roman Catholic Church is writ large but the problem of sexual abuse by clergy in Protestant, Jewish and other faith traditions, especially towards adult victims, is just as serious.

The church has addressed sexual abuse by clergy the same way the tobacco industry has addressed the fact that smoking causes cancer and other diseases. Deny, cover up, and avoid responsibility while the damage goes on. This is what we expect from the tobacco industry. It is not what we expect from our religious institutions.

We deserve responses grounded in sound theology and pastoral concern for victims of harm, practices that hold perpetrators accountable, actions that speak to the real substance and integrity of the institutional church, and leaders who have the courage to lead.

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Engaging Religious, Spiritual, and Faith-Based Groups and Organizations

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“TOOL KIT TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN”

Two out of every three Americans are affiliated with a religious, spiritual, or faith-based group or organization, and approximately one out of every four Americans is an active member of such a community. Based on the breadth and reach of these organizations, it is not surprising that many women and girls turn to religious leaders for guidance in dealing with violence. Some religious, spiritual, and faith-based organizations provide victims with well-informed, practical, and spiritual guidance, including referrals to other organizations. Religious organizations are essential to the culture and sustenance of communities and are uniquely positioned to champion efforts to end violence against women. Although philosophical differences have created tension between some religious, spiritual, and faith organizations and victim advocates, common ground can be found in shared interests to end violence against women. Faith-based groups and organizations often have strong relationships with communities of color, older women, women with disabilities, and immigrant communities. Religious organizations can reach the large numbers of people often underserved by other groups with messages of safety and support for victims and with information about offender accountability. Establishing training for and by members of religious communities and building the capacity to address the issue will strengthen the role of religious communities in ending violence against women and girls. Outlined below are specific actions religious, spiritual, and faith-based organizations, community-based sexual assault and domestic violence programs, secular victim services, advocacy programs, and public and private funders can take to end violence against women.

What Religious Communities Can Do

Commit to making the problem of violence against women and girls a critical concern.

- Emphasize the teachings, practices, and organizational structures that promote a woman's right to be free from violence, such as teachings that support equality and respect for women and girls.
- Develop theologically based materials that emphasize a woman's right to safety and support and a perpetrator's personal responsibility for ending the violence.
- Adopt policies developed by religious leaders that outline appropriate responses to victims and perpetrators of violence, and educate leaders about child abuse reporting requirements, the importance of confidentiality, misconduct by clergy or spiritual leaders, and other safety issues.
- Support local advocacy programs that provide services to victims and survivors by encouraging congregants to donate time, money, and other material resources.

Ensure that religious, spiritual, and faith-based communities are safe environments to allow victims of violence to discuss their experiences and seek healing.

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- Encourage members and leaders of churches, synagogues, mosques, and other spiritual or faith-based groups to seek training on victim and survivor experiences and on support that will restore and heal the victim.
- Create opportunities for survivors to discuss their experiences and needs. Form support groups in collaboration with local sexual assault and domestic violence programs for women who desire faith- or spirituality-based healing.
- Encourage members to discuss sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking within their faith communities in a manner that is sensitive to their cultures and backgrounds.
- Create or provide materials that address victims' concerns, and offer informed referrals to various advocacy organizations.
- Encourage men, particularly leaders in the community, to speak out and use their influence to communicate intolerance for violence against women and girls in all forms.
- Integrate information on sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking into existing activities.

Develop strategies to address the needs of all women and girls exposed to violence.

- Include members of specific ethnic and cultural groups in discussions of community efforts addressing violence.
- Seek advice from various age groups within communities on ways to address violence.
- Organize youth ministry and leadership groups to educate young people about the dynamics, impact, and prevention of sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.
- Inform leaders about the particular vulnerabilities of older people and people with disabilities who may be dependent on abusive partners or caregivers.
- Seek appropriate training and legal assistance before advising immigrant victims so as to avoid potentially compromising their citizenship status.

Develop and refine guidelines and protocols for responding to disclosures of sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking of a member of the congregation or community.

- Encourage support for a victim's continued inclusion in the community of her choice if the perpetrator is from the same community, including respecting emotional and physical safety considerations and no-contact orders.
- Consider the emotional and physical safety of victims and any dependents affected by victimization, including elderly relatives and children.
- Encourage youth workers to receive training on child abuse reporting requirements and local child welfare practices.

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- Encourage congregations, religious community centers, and other religious institutions to adopt policies for employees, members, and participants who may be victims or perpetrators of violence.
- Develop consistent policies for responding to misconduct or abuse by spiritual leaders or clergy to ensure that action is taken to protect congregants and that appropriate cases of clergy misconduct are referred to law enforcement agencies.

Create opportunities for youth to develop healthy and appropriate interpersonal relationships in the context of their religious, spiritual, or faith-based traditions.

- Consider conducting background checks of volunteers and staff who work with youth to try to ensure that they have not been perpetrators of physical or sexual violence.
- Invite youth to participate in the design and evaluation of programs that address their needs, such as writing and designing multimedia materials on safety and healthy relationships.
- Train youth to support victims and to constructively confront peers about violence against women and girls.

Institutionalize efforts to address violence against women and girls by educating, training, and supporting community leaders.

- Develop or expand core curriculums on violence against women in the basic education for religious leaders, including theory- and practice-oriented course work such as counseling or pastoral care.
- Create and support continuing education programs on violence against women.
- Develop and disseminate educational materials, regionally and nationally, about religious programming that address sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.
- Work with religious educational institutions to teach ordained and lay leaders how to develop programs that address sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking in religious communities.
- Partner with secular advocacy and direct service programs for consultation, support, or joint programming.

Draw on the resources of secular victim service, advocacy, and perpetrator treatment programs to enhance community responses to violence against women and girls.

- Network with victim service and advocacy programs to locate religious and secular allies on the local, regional, state, and national levels.
- Use the resources of other religious groups and existing sexual assault and domestic violence victim advocacy organizations to develop policies, protocols, and educational materials appropriate to specific traditions.
- Learn about local secular community protocols for handling sexual assault and dating and domestic violence.
- Make appropriate and informed referrals to local secular programs that have the expertise to help victims or perpetrators, including the legal community, health care system, and child welfare system.

- Collaborate with perpetrator treatment programs to hold perpetrators accountable for their violence.

What Secular Victim Advocates Can Do

Develop and expand relationships with religious organizations.

- Establish referral networks with religious leaders who understand the spiritual and practical issues facing survivors and perpetrators of violence.
- Establish ongoing opportunities for collaboration, cross training, technical assistance, and joint programming with religious organizations.
- Attend conventions and conferences organized by religious, faith-based, and spiritual organizations as participants, exhibitors, and presenters to raise awareness about the issue and available community resources.
- Collaborate with religious, spiritual, and faith-based groups and organizations to develop or adapt factual, germane materials for survivors and perpetrators of violence within those groups or organizations.
- Develop alliances with formal and informal men's groups both within and outside religious institutions to support their role in eliminating sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.
- Identify ways to institutionalize religious organizations' participation in local, regional, or statewide decision-making bodies, such as creating a vacancy on a board or commission for a "religious community representative" or establishing an interfaith task force as part of an existing commission.
- Work with religious organizations to secure appropriate funding for their participation in projects relating to violence against women and girls.

Direct resources to community-based sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking victim advocacy programs to help them better serve women with special religious and spiritual needs.

- Provide transportation to the victim's temple, church, or mosque, and provide religious or kosher foods, among other resources, to help her heal, recover, and obtain safety.

Develop and refine guidelines and protocols for dealing with victims and perpetrators who come from a religious background or present spiritual concerns.

- Enlist religious leaders to train advocates in addressing religious or spiritual questions with sensitivity and support.
- Refer victims, survivors, or perpetrators to trusted religious or spiritual resources.
- Collaborate with religious leaders and faith-based groups where appropriate.



Faith, Activism and Vocation: a discussion of intersections

BY SUZANNE BROWN- MCBRIDE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
WASHINGTON COALITION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAMS



This is a discussion Suzanne Brown-McBride, Executive Director of the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs had with Kevin Glackin-Coley, lobbyist for the Children's Alliance in Seattle. "Kevin is a friend and colleague. When we first met Kevin was the Associate Director for the Washington State Catholic Conference. We've worked together over time, and have had many opportunities to talk about the intersections between faith, social justice, and victim advocacy. In this discussion I asked Kevin to dialogue about how his activism and faith have informed his work and life."



Suzanne: How did you find that there was a nexus between your work as a person who's interested in social justice issues and also a person of faith?

Kevin: In high school I felt that I had been born too early or too late. I was actually born in 1959. One of my uncles had been involved in anti-war issues, but during my high school years social issues were not prevalent on our campus. Even though my family wasn't very committed to going to church, and I had no background with the church community, I wound up attending a Jesuit college in Chicago.



I got a work study job at the Campus Ministry Office and became interested in various ministry programs. Prior to this, everything I'd ever heard about this guy Jesus sounded pretty good, but I didn't see anybody putting it into practice. When I did see people shifting beyond just talking the talk, to actually walking the faith walk, I begin to find a melding for me through the social teachings of the Catholic Church. It gave me a framework for how I could actually implement the practice of these principles of faith. Through faith I had an awakening and recognized that there is something beyond me. I am a white male, well-educated, third-generation recipient of a Master's Degree in North America. I'm considered at the top of the food chain, but I understood that I didn't get here on my own and I had a responsibility to the choices I made in regards to how I responded to that privilege.



Suzanne: So, through your interest in social justice, you came to your faith? When did you find yourself involved with larger social justice issues?

Kevin: I guess it derived out of my work in regards to hunger issues. People are hungry so you start food drives, at least I did. The food drives led me to soup kitchens, and I then began to question myself, "Why are so many people hungry?" In Chicago the soup kitchen was adjacent to the Gold Coast. It was not unusual that people were sheltered in the church basement, ate at the church kitchen, and received clothing from the clothing bank down the street. However, just a few blocks down that same street were \$100,000 condominiums. Something was clearly wrong with that picture. An analogy I often use is if you see somebody floating downstream and you want to pull them out of the river when you suddenly notice another person floating downstream.

So you yell for others to come and help pull these bodies out. And those who come to help start building fires to warm the people you've pulled out of the river, bringing food and clothing, and all of that is works of mercy. Then you notice somebody going upstream and you ask, "Where are you going? We need you here." That person responds by saying, "I'm going upstream to see how this happened." And that is the balance, works of mercy and works of justice. Neither one is necessarily more important than the other. It's a question of where you are in life and what you're called to do. For instance, as a chaplain I've spent a lot of time working with the criminal justice system.

Suzanne: So you started your prison ministry in Monroe as a chaplain?

Kevin: No, I actually started when I worked on the streets in Tacoma at a drop-in center for the homeless. The director of that center and I noticed people kept going away for an extended period of time and it wasn't because they had a job or got housing. It was because they were at the Tacoma-Pierce County Jail. I visited people in jail and focused on community education on criminal justice issues. I started looking at a variation of issues such as: victim's issues, offender's families, the cost of the criminal justice system, and disproportional incarceration. Through community education on criminal justice issues, the dialogue led to questions such as, "What do we want the jails to do?" Eventually that led me to working in the prison system.

Suzanne: So, you continued that marriage between the ideas of criminal justice work and educating communities about the implications of prisons and disproportional incarceration? Also, as a result of directly working with people in the institutions, what did you learn out of that experience talking with people who were incarcerated? It sounds like you were already working with a lot of them along the margin.

Kevin: I talked to people I knew from the streets, and then I would see them in jail. The disheartening thing about it was I had better conversations with them in jail than I had with them on the streets because in jail at least they were not worrying about where their next meal was coming from. Some were worried about their physical safety, but even so that was less of a worry than the things that they worried about on the streets. For instance, while incarcerated they were not worried about where they were going to get their next fix because for the most part, they might have been white-knuckling it. But being incarcerated they were clean and they had shelter, and food. So, as a result of their incarceration they reflected on the choices they had been making, what happened to them in their lives that caused them to get to this place, and what they would do differently if they got out?

The disheartening thing is that the release process is set up for failure. They get released at five in the morning from the Pierce County Jail because that was a convenient time for a shift change, and where do they go? The street community was always more welcoming than the "straight" community. I mean the stores were all closed, offices were all closed, churches were all closed, but the streets are always open. So, they get released and wind up back down at 25th and Pacific, or [other locations] and you can pencil in the blank in your own town. It's a cycle.

Suzanne: How did that shape your work as a chaplain? How did it also shape the information that you communicated back to your community?

Kevin: I went out and gave talks and would ask, “How many people feel safer than they did ten-years-ago?” No one raised their hands even though the crime rates have gone down. But with the news broadcasting new stories and the increasing prison population, people are beginning to feel less and less safe.

Suzanne: And so how did you grow your consciousness of victims?

Kevin: You go and visit an offender and they’re really happy to see you for the most part. You get with the victim, and the pain is a different kind of pain. It was a lack of courage on my part to seek out victims because it’s much harder than working with offenders. A victim was in the hospital after a shooting as a result of a family violence incident. Right after the shooting one of his family members asked him had he forgiven them. The victim thoughts were, “Excuse me? I’m in pain,” and he was afraid that they were going to come and finish him off. Three years later they asked him the same question and he responded, “No.” A woman whose brother was a cabbie in Alaska was shot and killed. She was a nun at the time. Prison Ministries would send her notes on detention ministry letterhead and even though they were reaching out to her she felt like, “I don’t see myself in that name.” This is my reality as a victim.” As you know Suzanne, a minor victory I had was the change of the name of our office to Criminal Justice Ministries.

Suzanne: That’s one of the dilemmas, this idea of forgiveness. Some victims will tell you that the idea of forgiveness is what saved their lives and that they had to figure out how to forgive and how to integrate or move on. Other victims say absolutely, “I will not. That’s not a part of who I am and what I am.” Perhaps one of the powerful components of a faith tradition is that while you know some people may not be able to embrace all the pieces of it, there are bits that they can cling to like ritual and like remembrance and the support of people close to them in order to try to survive crime and move to the next spot.

Kevin: To not just let people be in the place where they are is a disservice. In the Catholic tradition we have seven deadly sins, and anger is one of them. My friend who was shot in a robbery tells of struggling with this concept. He would be standing in the checkout line and would hear a sound or a movement behind him and that would trigger a memory of the day he had been shot. And he would go right into the rage. His concern was, “Can I be a good person if I’m that angry?” And slowly he began to realize that he could, but it took time. You need to give people the space and time. You know why we shy away from offenders and victims of crime? We shy away because it’s painful and it’s contagious, and you don’t want to go there because you might have to feel that pain.

Suzanne: Much of the way that we have been working with offenders has been paved by faith communities. I think it’s an interesting blueprint for us in terms of how we think.

Kevin: The Catholic community is the only one I can speak directly about. We have this whole scriptural mandate to visit the imprisoned. I think if Jesus spoke, he would say, “Man you need to visit those who have been hurt as well.” It’s easy to visit the imprisoned because I know where they are. I know where all the prisons are, I know all the jails, all the juvenile facilities, but where are the victims? And all don’t disclose in their own community. For whatever reason, their sense of privacy, they want to protect their family member who’s been hurting, so many reasons. How do you develop a way of talking about issues that always let’s them know at least they’re being honored and respected? Even if they’re not coming forth and saying this is the help I need.

I talk about the death penalty a lot, and I realized what I needed to do. Every time I talk about it, I start by asking if there's anybody in the audience who is a family member or friend of a murdered victim. Always somebody raises their hand, and I always say there's probably others who don't want to disclose that information, but I remind them that the only reason we talk about the death penalty and what we do with offenders is because this violence happened, and we always have to remember why we're here.

Suzanne: What do you think are some of the best accomplishments of your community in terms of this work?

Kevin: The best accomplishment has been a desire to try to be more balanced. I mean part of the problem is that we do know where the jails and prisons are. It's possible to have a program at every prison and at every juvenile facility. We need to have a more balanced approach and we need to recognize that folks have been victimized by crime in nearly every community. It's important how we in our language talk about criminal justice, victims, and offenders. We need to recognize the need to work in coalition with other groups. The work that you and I did on the Partnership for Community Safety, I think, was a way of recognizing that you and I are both relatively balanced; we come from organizations that sit on different ends of the spectrum, but the two of us worked together, and that is a broad support for trying to do this better. It's like why would sexual assault programs care about housing high-risk offenders?

Suzanne: What do you think are the challenges - for you as somebody who continues to hold your faith close, or even just for the institution which you're less formally a part of, but still I assume you still consider yourself practicing?

Kevin: Oh yes, until I get it right. It's a struggle with anything. There are so many things you can focus on. Part of the struggle with individuals within the institution is that the institution's not focusing on the things I really want it to focus on because this is really important to me. Now how do you get to the point where you recognize that there's space in there for all those things to happen? At my church, my particular parish, they are probably the most progressive Catholic parish in Tacoma. If you poll people I think that most folks would be opposed to the war, but we have been praying for people serving in Iraq. I wish we had been able to do more with Victim's Ministry, but it didn't get funded. My hope is that the church recognizes the need to work with victims of crime. It's the right thing to do although there are those saying, "We can't go there, we should go out and do some other things." So, for me, I recognized that I need to find a place where I can do what I can do well.



Speaking the Unspoken The Perspective of the Muslim Faith

BY RISHO SAPANO AND FARHIYA MOHAMED

According to Islam all aspects of life, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual, are sacred and must be respected. *“Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition”* **Quran 16:90**

In the above verse, God thus strongly forbids and condemns any act of violence, injustice and oppression and gave no one the power or right to hurt or harm others. Therefore, in communities of faith, sexual assault is a punishable crime in the earth and thereafter.

In Muslim communities, you will not hear the words sexual assault or domestic violence though these hideous crimes exist almost in all communities around the world regardless of religion, race, and socio-economic status. In our Muslim society, victims of sexual assault often prefer to keep their horrible secrets to themselves, knowing they will generally be blamed for the shameful act even though they are victims and not perpetrators. Sexual assault is an unacceptable crime which is often perpetrated in the privacy of homes or is committed by those whom people may be close to or trust. This makes it not only unacceptable, but dishonorable as well. When it comes to dealing with sexual assault, many Muslim societies follow their cultural traditions rather than abiding by the Holy script, the Qur’an. As a way of “protecting” the victim’s chastity and her family’s reputation, the victim of sexual assault is forced to marry the rapist and she has no other choice. Fearing the social sanction/pressure, the victim agrees to live with her abuser and you can imagine how miserable her life would be, knowing that she is powerless.

Unfortunately, not a lot of people, especially women know their rights in Islam. This creates misconception about the punishment of the perpetrator and the protection of the victim. Quite often, people mistake adultery “zina” with sexual assault. While the first one means committing a consensual sexual act outside marital relationship, the later means forcing someone to have sex against their will. Women, victim of sexual assault perceive that they’ve committed adultery “zina” which if proven to be true is punishable in Islamic courts by stoning to death or flogging, depending on the marital status of the people involved in the incident. Fearing the awful consequences, victims of rape/sexual assault often comply with what the society dictates even if they do not agree with it.

Suggestions:

- Education and awareness for Muslim men and women on domestic violence and sexual assault from a religious and cultural perspective.
- More education about the USA laws regarding these crimes.
- More collaboration between faith-based and main stream organizations in conducting awareness campaigns around these issues.

“As a way of “protecting” the victim’s chastity and her family’s reputation, the victim of sexual assault is forced to marry the rapist and she has no other choice.”

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Ryan Warner

Exploring Complex and Important Relationships Between People with Disabilities and Communities of Faith

By RYAN WARNER, DISABILITIES PROJECT COORDINATOR
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Sexual violence has a profound effect on individuals, our families, and our communities. According to the National Institute of Justice one out of every six American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime. The affects of sexual violence reverberate through the lives of not only those who are directly impacted by sexual violence, but it also has an effect on family, friends, and communities. Just as all of society is affected by sexual violence, everyone has a role to play in eliminating it. For many people, their religious faith provides a great deal of support and guidance in difficult circumstances. As an example, a 2001 Harris Research survey indicated that 84% of people with disabilities claim their religious faith plays an important role in their lives.

The intersection between sexual violence, people with disabilities, and communities of faith is extremely complex. This intersection becomes more challenging when considered in the context of the historical marginalization of people with disabilities, and the silence surrounding sexual violence. Although there are no easy answers to the questions generated by the complexities of the relationship between sexual violence, people with disabilities, and the faith communities, it is important the questions be asked and the answers be discussed. This article will present the voices of two women, Andrea Archer and Della Kant, with different disabilities and different experiences, but both cite their faiths as an integral aspect of their lives.

Both of the women are heavily involved in educating their communities about accessibility and access issues. Andrea Archer works at Project Fun in Spokane, which provides site accessibility analysis to organizations throughout the Inland Empire. When speaking of the work she does Andrea says, “I can either be bitter at God and then I don’t have a relationship with him, or I can say Thank you God for giving me a gift that I can now use to educate, bring awareness, and empower other people.” Della Kant runs her own consulting business which trains faith communities to become more accessible to people with disabilities. In talking about her work, Della says, “My goal is that if a person with a disability says, ‘I want to go to church today’ they look up a church in the phone book and look up the address. They don’t have to worry about disability parking, getting in the door, or bathrooms accessibility. I want people with disabilities to be able to go to that church just like anybody else does.” She continues, “my strength is easily working with people, easily educating them, putting people who don’t have disabilities at ease around people who have disabilities. It just seems fit for me to go into churches and work with them on the beliefs people have around people with disabilities.”

People with disabilities find numerous strengths in their communities of faith. The church’s commitment to social justice and service to the community are important aspects of the faith experience. Andrea Archer notes that “we are called as Christians to reach out to those who are hurting, called on to be proactive on behalf of those who cannot help themselves. It goes beyond charity.... good service to the community is about giving people the tools to empower themselves.”

“I can either be bitter at God and then I don’t have a relationship with him, or I can say Thank you God for giving me a gift that I can now use to educate, bring awareness, and empower other people.”

Along with the numerous strengths of the community, there are also many different challenges in the relationship between people with disabilities and communities of faith. Many of the challenges focus on the physical church building, as well as attitudinal barriers within the faith community itself. The churches attitudes concerning disability can set the tone for the experience of people with disabilities within the congregation. Della Kant, when commenting on her experience in her church community said, “They made it very accessible from the very beginning; we’ve been in the building about two years... I have never felt like I was a person with a disability. I have always felt in this community, that I am a person first.” Speaking on attitudinal barriers from another perspective, Andrea Archer commented, “I think we are afraid of what we don’t know. Afraid of what is going to happen if I talk to that person.”

The relationships of people with disabilities with God are as diverse as the people with disabilities themselves. There are no common characteristics, no unifying traits. Andrea Archer describes her relationship by saying “It comes down to just me and God. What is God telling me about who I am to him? And if I didn’t have that, I don’t think I would be at as much peace with myself.” “I’ve called upon the wisdom of the Bible to encourage me that forgiveness is possible. That liking myself is okay. Loving myself is okay. The second commandment of the Bible says “Love your neighbor as yourself.” You have to love yourself before you have the ability to love your neighbor.”

Each of the women had suggestions about how faith communities could become more accessible to people with disabilities who have been sexually assaulted. Della stressed the importance of “making sure that all services, programs and facilities are accessible to people with disabilities who have been sexually assaulted. I think churches need to look at the physical accessibility, the program accessibility, and their own belief systems.” Andrea also noted the importance of “the church being trained by professionals out in the community on how to respond to [issues of sexual assault]. In the conservative Christian churches there’s subliminal thinking that says that if the name of God isn’t in it, it’s not right. And I’ve learned that there is much wisdom out there in the world without the name of God attached to it.”

As the stories of Andrea and Della have demonstrated, the experiences of people with disabilities in faith communities are broad and diverse. Both stories provide a clear demonstration of the powerful role that faith plays in the lives of women with disabilities as well as the important function women with disabilities play in communities of faith. The stories of these two women provide evidence of the role faith communities play within people lives, and speak to the importance of individual communities acting as agents of change who are working towards an end to sexual violence. Sexual violence can end, but it will take everyone in communities working in coordination to address the needs of survivors and speak out against rape.

“We are called as Christians to reach out to those who are hurting, called on to be proactive on behalf of those who cannot help themselves. It goes beyond charity... good service to the community is about giving people the tools to empower themselves.”



Reverend Al Miles

A Perpetrator? Can't Be?

REVEREND AL MILES
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I lived in Hawaii for less than a month when one day a 25 year old local woman, let's call her Amy, was referred to me by one of the managers at the medical center where I serve as chaplain. Though not a hospital employee, the manager thought Amy would benefit from the support of a "pastor with an accurate biblical perspective." The manager declined my invitation to further explain what this statement meant, saying she thought Amy should be the one to elaborate, I agreed to see the young woman.

Physically beautiful and with a mind equally attractive, Amy radiated confidence, grace, and vitality as she introduced herself at my office on the day of our meeting. After ten minutes of small talk, I asked her why she had decided to come and see me.

"I got married eight months ago," explained Amy as her naturally glowing face was quickly replaced by a shroud of sadness. "My husband, Samuel, who's really a great Christian guy that everyone loves, has not been himself lately. For the past several weeks, he, uh, has, uh, been under a lot of pressure at work. And sometime...sometimes, he, he, uh, says and does things to me that he later feels awful about. As I've said, we're both long-standing Christians, so I just know, pastor, I know..."

Amy's words trailed off as she began to cry. In silence I sat and watched, not wanting to interrupt what appeared to be a very deep expression of pain and sorrow. When her tears began to subside several moments later, I asked the young bride to say more about what her husband did and said to her when he felt "under pressure."

Describing herself as a "mediocre cook at best," Amy stated she understood why Samuel had told her the week before that the dishes she prepared weren't fit for a starving rat." The young woman also seemed to comprehend the reason her husband had recently called her a "stupid bitch"- because she'd forgotten to buy the type of bagels he liked. Amy even expressed an understanding as to why Samuel had began referring to her as a "cold fish" and a "sexual retard." After all, she explained, "men need sex more often than women."

I, myself, failed to have the same appreciation or justification for Samuel's behavior toward his wife. I told Amy that no one deserved to be criticized or referred to with such emotionally and sexually abusive language, and that Samuel's actions were in clear violation of how the Christian Scriptures instruct husbands to treat their wives. Then I asked Amy if she had discussed this situation with her pastor.

The query caused tears to well in Amy's eyes. She informed me that the reason my colleague at the medical center, who knew both Amy and Samuel from church, had suggested she meet with me because of the way their own minister had responded to Amy's disclosure.

"Unfortunately, countless survivors have told me how they've sought the support of their pastor, priest, or rabbi only to either be blamed for the abuse or not believed."

“I thought I could tell Pastor Ralph what was happening in my marriage without him taking sides,” lamented Amy. “After all, he’d known both Samuel and me since we were teens, and he also officiated at our wedding.”

But soon Amy discovered that her assumption about how the minister would respond was inaccurate.

“Pastor Ralph said, ‘Samuel certainly doesn’t look or act like a perpetrator, Amy. He’s a fine Christian young man. I just can’t imagine him ever saying the horrible things you’re accusing him of saying. Is this a particularly emotional time of the month for you?’” Amy had left Pastor Ralph’s office feeling depressed and sickened, knowing that the minister was blaming her for Samuel’s behavior.

If Pastor Ralph was the only clergy member to offer a victim of domestic abuse the type of feedback he gave to Amy, this would still be terrible. But, unfortunately, countless survivors have told me how they’ve sought the support of their pastor, priest, or rabbi only to either be blamed for the abuse or not believed.

Several of these abused and battered women have in fact been told by clergy that the accused husband or boyfriend just couldn’t be guilty of any form of abuse because he simply didn’t “look” or “act” like a perpetrator.

I find this response all the more disturbing because it suggests that clergy members (and other individuals from both the religious and secular world) still harbor within themselves certain stereotypical profiles of how men who victimize their intimate partners look and act. The over-marching beliefs are that these men come from nonwhite racial groups, have no religious affiliations, abuse alcohol and other drugs, are poor, undereducated, and, if employed at all, are blue-collar workers.

As a point of fact, many perpetrators of domestic abuse do fit into one or more of the above categories. They also, however, possess the following characteristics: white, middle and upper – class males, involved faithfully in their churches, synagogues, or temples, with degrees in education, law, medicine, theology, and serving their communities in such positions as attorneys, physicians, professional athletes, university professors, and pastors.

There is no way perpetrators of domestic abuse can be identified by the manner in which they present themselves in public. These men are often charming and are master manipulators. They attract a vast amount of praise from people with whom they associate outside of their homes. “Carl is a wonderful Christian, husband, and father. He gives a lot of money and most of his free time to the work of the church. “Mike is such a great guy, visiting the ill and elderly at nearby hospitals and retirement centers.” Samuel is a fine Christian young man, an excellent youth worker, and loving husband to his beautiful young bride, Amy.”

“Several of these abused and battered women have in fact been told by clergy that the accused husband or boyfriend just couldn’t be guilty of any form of abuse because he simply didn’t “look” or “act” like a perpetrator.”

While perpetrators often have winning public personas, at home they present a totally different “look” and “act.” Many victims describe their husbands or boyfriends as having a “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” type of personality. One moment, the women say, these men are kind (or, at least, non abusive), and the next they are cruel.

Let’s consider the story of Helen and William, a white couple in their early forties who have been married for 18 years. They have two teenage children, a daughter and a son. Childhood sweethearts, Helen and William are the envy of people living in their small university town where both are well-respected and tenured professors. They are also committed Christians who have been actively involved in their church for more than a quarter of a century. Everyone praises Helen and William because of the deep love and respect they have for one another.

No one, however, knows that William has been abusing Helen the entire time they’ve been married. “My husband first revealed a side of himself I’d not previously seen a week into our marriage,” says Helen. “During our wedding night he told me that he requires sex every night. I thought he was joking, but soon discovered he was dead serious.”

The first time Helen declined her husband’s lovemaking offer, a week into their marriage, he unraveled. Abruptly getting up out of their bed, William stormed out of the room and went downstairs to the kitchen. “I thought he was making himself a cup of tea because I hear water running into the kettle,” Helen recalled.

William returned to the bedroom five minutes later, lifted the blanket off of his wife, who was starting to fall asleep, and poured scalding water all over her body. “I was so shocked and frightened by what he did that I didn’t even feel the pain of my second-degree burns until later,” confessed Helen. “As I lay in bed crying uncontrollably over what this man, my husband, had done to me, William put his face very close to mine and said in an angry but even tone, ‘Never, ever refuse to have sex with me again. I am your master; you are my servant – just as the Bible says. I’ll be damned if I let my wife tell me what she will and will not do.’”

The abuse that William still perpetrates against his wife became even more imprisoning and tortuous after their two children were born. Always accusing Helen of having an extramarital affair with any male – a checkout boy at the grocery store, service station attendants, and most of her male students – William misjudged his wife’s maternal love for their children as a “further sign of marital infidelity.” He told Helen that the Bible commanded him to “punish” her for being unfaithful.

“William not only increased his physical and sexual abuse,” Helen disclosed, “but he also made me give away my beloved cat and birds. He then ordered me to cut off all outside relationships, even with my two sisters, and forced me to make up some lie about how I thought they’d stolen something from our home one Christmas. He also stripped me of all financial independence.”

Even though she is also a tenured professor, Helen has no line of credit. Several years ago, William closed all of the couple’s joint accounts, and put everything – cars, cards, checking and savings accounts, and their home – in his name. “I don’t even have the means to use a credit card to charge a carton of milk or a can of soup,” Helen decried.

“William is loved by everyone – at the university, in the community, and at church. He is viewed by our pastors and the entire congregation as the perfect husband, father, and man of God. Who would even want to believe that he’s an evil monster at home?”

While Helen lives in a perpetual hell on earth, William’s life continues to flourish. Last year he was honored in his town as both professor and community person of the year. Even though William has constantly told his wife (and children) she would suffer the consequences should she ever leave him or tell anyone about his abusive ways, Helen says she’s thought a lot lately about exposing her husband as “the fraud he’s always been.” But the battered wife quickly adds, “William is loved by everyone – at the university, in the community, and at church. He is viewed by our pastors and the entire congregation as the perfect husband, father, and man of God. Who would even want to believe that he’s an evil monster at home?”

He certainly doesn’t look or act like a perpetrator? Clergy members and all other people of faith beware. Most men who abuse and batter their wives, like Samuel and William, look and act like men who are not victimizers—at least in public. Don’t be fooled by outward appearances. Remember, perpetrators are often both charming and very manipulative.

How can we become better equipped to address the myriad complexities associated with both abusers and their victims? Read the numerous excellent articles, books, and pamphlets that have been written about domestic abuse over the past 25 years...

We must also ask God to grant us a discerning spirit, knowing that the old maxim “sometimes things are too good to be true” certainly applies when it comes to perpetrators of domestic abuse.

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Reverend Myrondous Washington
and wife, DiShan Washington

The Big Beautiful Church

REVEREND MYRONDOUS WASHINGTON

Constantly in the church arena, I find myself quite troubled over the past few years with the present state of the universal church. I have noticed far too many Christians are beginning to lose their true purpose and mission in Christ. The fading mission of agape love and self-sacrificing care for each other has left the world wondering where is the true church? It seems as though the pure blood of the church has once again become polluted with controlling opinions, hidden agendas, political polling, and religious lobbying. This pollution has paralyzed, and rendered far too many congregations ineffective in their local communities.

The Big Church: A member of my congregation recently asked me my opinion on big churches better known today as mega churches. I knew the sensitivity of the issue so I answered quite cautiously. I turned and said to this precious saint, “There is a great difference between big and fat.” Many churches are becoming fat; meaning oversized and under worked. They are becoming fat with money, mindsets, even celebrity status, but they would shed many pounds in their membership if they would begin to truly exercise the will of God. There are many churches whose physical membership roles are minimized, but they are becoming very big. They are a big part of their communities. They play a big part in local educational programs. They are huge in family strength and unity. And in heaven their roles keeps growing every day as they continue to add souls to the body of Christ. So in closing, I said to my precious member, “I don’t mind our church becoming big; I just don’t want us to get fat.” I want our church to remain in the will of God.

Just as the world has superstars; the church is now developing superstars for the new mega movement. Young novices in Christ now aspire to appearances on TBN and other Christian television networks while neglecting to share Christ with their co-worker whom they see every day. People attend conferences and workshops all across the world depending on whether or not their favorite Christian personality will host the event. It’s no longer about hearing from God and obeying; it’s all about being famous and reaching Christian stardom. We crown new personalities with each New Year and label them prophets without ever knowing how they live. Pastors seek for the highest paying positions and board members lobby for control. The true church is in trouble and the world is suffering grievously while we play games and “have church.”

“It seems as though the pure blood of the church has once again become polluted with controlling opinions, hidden agendas, political polling, and religious lobbying.”

The Beautiful Church: This is the type of church you attend and the congregation has labored to have everything in order, the carpet is immaculate, the pews are artfully trimmed, and even the members look flawless. The truth is that many times behind the chandeliers and beautiful floral arrangements lurks darkened hearts and filthy souls hidden behind the curtain of religion. Congregates of the beautiful church have paid so much for their pews that they really don’t want drug addicts and prostitutes to enter or sit upon them lest they soil them with their dirty linen. These members devalue anyone who doesn’t have a college degree and speak French. Their church is so beautiful and clean, that they only seek certain types of people to attend. You know the people that have money, and position. They rub their pious poise bellies around dinner tables and brag on who attends their church. Sadly, most of these congregates of religious zealots are yet to notice that Jesus doesn’t attend their services anymore, because Jesus said, “... they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Matthew 9:12). Jesus loves you no matter what you’re wearing or how you smell. He doesn’t even see you as you are, he sees you as whose you’ll be when he’s done with you.



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New Mountain Top Missionary
Baptist Church

“I suppose people have forgotten that the church was formed to be a spiritual recovery room.”

“There remains a true church that’s big in love and compassion. A church that’s beautiful with flowers of forgiveness and restoration.”

In the bible times, the pharisaic leaven had choked the love out of religion leaving a plethora of wounded souls with nowhere to turn. Maybe you attend a church that’s filled with religion and destitute of love, or maybe you don’t attend service at all because of experiences with a congregation similar to the one described above. Allow me to say that the true church is really not that way. The true church is beautiful with flowers of love and forgiveness. The true church has chandeliers of charity and pews of peace. The true church will never condemn you neither will its’ members make you feel ashamed. You will know you have found a true church not by its architectural design, but by the love you find inside.

The Blind Church: In America there is a spiritual blinding of religion that presently prevails over the authoritative word of God. This spirit of religion survives in the name of peace. I suppose people have forgotten that the church was formed to be a spiritual recovery room. It seems as though now if you mention any form of struggle or expose works of evil you’re called a troublemaker and a problematic member. It is an atrocity when people cover up evil in the name of church unity, harmony, and peace. Some people even use forgiveness and grace as a license for their sin. When a young woman is abused in the modern church, she not only copes with the dilemma of her world being shattered through bodily violation, but also she battles the burden of being concerned with her local reputation. If she exposes the deed, she’s a troublemaker, but if she hides the brokenness she feels cheap and dirty.

Sexual abuse is not just common in the world; it’s very prevalent in the church. Yes, behind many church choir robes are perverted men and women who take advantage of young boys and girls everyday. The puzzling thing is how the church so easily chooses to ignore such evil. I read in a chapter of George Bloomer’s book titled “Witchcraft in the Pews” that stated a young girl who came to her pastor and shared that she was being sexually assaulted by her cousin as well as her uncle. Instead of the pastor taking a stand against such evil, he continued it by having sex with her for the next several months. The young girl is presently in a mental institution. This type of evil happens every day and sadly, it’s probably happened to some of you.

Allow me to apologize. I apologize to every alcoholic who came to church, but was turned away because you didn’t smell good enough or your hair was not neatly cut. I apologize to every drug addict who was turned away from church because you heard the people whispering while you came in. I apologize to every prostitute who turned away because you were not “sexually pure” and had a reputation. I’m sorry for every young boy who was molested and tried to tell members of your church only to watch them ignore your pain and agony for peace sake. And I apologize to you if you are reading this article and any of the areas resonates in your mind concerning former dealings with the church. All churches are not filled with “people who ignore pain.” There remains a true church. A church that’s big in love and compassion, a church that’s beautiful with the flowers of forgiveness and restoration. And, finally, a church that won’t ignore your pain, but will help you recover from life’s trauma instead of judging. To all who read this article there is a true church and it’s big and beautiful and does not hide from the pain of it’s congregation.

REVEREND MYRONDOUS WASHINGTON ACCEPTED THE CALLING TO PREACH THE GOSPEL AT 19 YEARS OF AGE. HE HAS BEEN PREACHING FOR 9 YEARS AND IS PRIVILEGED AND HONORED IN HIS SERVITUDE AS SENIOR PASTOR OF NEW MOUNTAIN TOP MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH LOCATED IN DOUGLASVILLE, GEORGIA.



Can This Spiritual Practice Be Saved?

BY JAN CHOZEN BAYS

A Parable

After ten years of hard study, Mojo begins work as a spiritual teacher with only a dozen students. The students have a lot of access to him, both in group gatherings and in private interviews. They spend time with their teacher in his home and work shoulder to shoulder in the gardens. Each student feels Mojo knows him intimately.

Gradually Mojo's reputation grows and within five years there are more than a hundred students living at the spiritual center and several satellite groups around the country and overseas. Mojo is busy traveling, attending meetings with people who administer the organization, and meeting with public figures to raise money and oil the political machinery necessary to keep his organization going. Students get to see him once a month in public talks if he is in town. Often they must watch videotaped lectures from the early years.

Students long for a personal connection with the teacher. If he makes eye contact with them or says an individual word in passing, they treasure it for days. People insert "Mojo says..." into conversation to imply they have talked with the teacher. People begin to vie for any tiny bit of personal contact by rushing to be the first to bring Mojo hot tea at a meeting, or remove his shoes and secretly polish them, weed his garden, or tend his children. His wife at first is happy to have a bevy of students cleaning house, cooking, helping entertain guests, and babysitting. She secretly enjoys being Queen of the Way, loved and waited on by all her husband's students.

But soon a small unease develops. If her husband sneezes, students rush up with Kleenex, herbal tea, Vitamin C, and offers of therapeutic massage. When will they begin to wipe her husband's bottom for him?

She has no one to go to for advice. Everyone she knows is her husband's student and more loyal to him than to her. She is the only one who sees Mojo at his most ordinary, sneaking a forbidden cigarette, upset when the toilet paper runs out or the children spill their juice. All the other students see his anger as crazy wisdom and try to learn from it. She suspects that some students feel that she and the children are an impediment to Mojo's true mission in life, diverting energy from his ability to teach.

Mojo is surprised at how quickly his popularity has risen. At first he was pleased to have so many students, it confirmed the truth of his understanding and his teaching skill. With legions of students eager to do The Work of the Way, the community was able to get a lot accomplished: building meditation and dormitory halls, maintaining gardens, and doing community outreach projects with the poor.

He has little time to practice himself. He is in such demand that he can't find time to practice or read to find a source of inspiration. He begins to repeat old talks, and gets tired of hearing himself tell the same spiritual anecdotes.

He enjoyed long retreats, when everyone put aside their trivial concerns and strove for the same goal, enlightenment. It was then that he experienced true, deep intimacy with students in private interview. Their hearts were so pure, so open. He felt himself a true teacher, committed wholly to the Way, gently guiding students toward realization.

At the end of retreats when everyone left, he felt lonely. What occurred in the interview room was secret, so there was no one he could talk to about his own insights, dilemmas, doubts, and triumphs. One student showed exceptional promise, and he found himself beginning to confide in her, telling himself it would help her to know these things when she became a teacher one day. When he was tired he found himself wanting to rest just for a moment in her arms.

His student was flattered by the attention she received, and awed by Mojo's statements that she had unusual potential for realization. She might even be a teacher someday herself. She treasured each moment with him, and would have been glad to be his daily attendant, doing anything he asked, just to be able to hear a few scraps of his conversations. She learned so much from his every word and gesture! She liked Mojo's wife, but felt she should be more generous about sharing her extraordinary husband with his students.

Lately she had been feeling that she and Mojo shared a spiritual bond that was much deeper than ordinary marriage. He had even said that worldly marriage was only for one lifetime, but a true, pure, spiritual marriage of minds and understanding would last forever. She wondered what kind of child would be the result of a physical union between two clear beings. In certain traditions when a great teacher died, he could reappear in the form of a infant. Perhaps she would be the vessel to bear such a child!

In the words of Good Housekeeping magazine, can this marriage (and these spiritual practices) be saved?

Snags to catch our toes

Since I have begun teaching I've become aware of the subtle yet powerful forces that play upon a teacher. These forces can cause difficulties in spiritual communities, from mild upsets to disastrous eruptions. I've stumbled my way through some of these problems. Unable to pack every variety of misadventure into 20 years of being a student and ten years of teaching, I've read books and talked to a number of students from the several Buddhist traditions about problems they encountered. In this article, I have organized these problems by cause so we can begin to discuss them and diagnose others that may come to light. The parables in this article are composites. The fact that students and teachers from many different practice centers have recognized these accounts speaks to the commonality of the forces and themes.

Abuse of power

When intensive meditation practice is being undertaken, as in long silent retreats, the whole world narrows to that of the meditation hall and interview room. The student becomes intensely bonded to the teacher, the only person s/he talks to in hours or days of silent meditation. When bewildering or unusual phenomena occur, the student is completely dependent upon the teacher for reassurance and guidance. Intense emotions arise during such times, from terror to spontaneous outpourings of love and gratitude. There is tremendous intimacy in the interview room. Even if the student and teacher are so fortunate as to have no difficulties with intimacy under ordinary circumstances, the intensity of the bond in the daisan room is intoxicating.

The teacher must not allow a student to attribute the phenomena that occur naturally with intense spiritual practice to the personal abilities or charisma of the teacher. This is an ever present danger.

In its subtlest form, the danger may appear when a teacher thinks, “Well, maybe I was just a bit clever in seeing where that person was stuck. None of her former teachers saw it.” Or in not persistently deflecting the gratitude that comes with a spiritual insight back where it belongs: to the Buddha Dharma.

In its grossest form, the teacher may believe that s/he has such clear understanding that anything s/he does with a student is enlightened activity. This has included insulting students publicly, physically injuring or having a sexual relationship with them, exploiting students for free labor, subtly extorting money (for the sake of the Dharma), or insinuating him/herself between members of a couple and bringing about the end of a marriage.

Idealization and isolation of the teacher

Being a teacher is a lonely business. Alone in the midst of clamoring, adoring students, the teacher is seen as the ultimate embodiment of accomplished practice. Personality quirks and flaws may be mistaken for manifestations of enlightenment. The teacher cannot admit doubt or failure lest the spiritual path be questioned. There is a misunderstanding, encouraged by the hopes of many students and perpetuated by the silence of many teachers, that anyone who is sanctioned to teach Buddhism must be completely enlightened. Even if this were true, actualization takes decades of dedicated practice after realization(s).

It is the teacher’s responsibility to inform students that s/he is not a fully enlightened, actualized being, but just another human being who will make mistakes. The teacher should also be a living example of the willingness to learn from anyone or any circumstance. The Buddha was clearly aware of the problem of spiritual pride. The gravest lie cited in the Vinaya is to boast about (directly or even imply) having reached some higher stage of spiritual development.

Failure to recognize archetypal energies

As more women become spiritual teachers, we will face the problem of abuse of power by women. Can we predict what this will look like in advance, perhaps to recognize and interrupt it early? What are typical feminine archetypal energies that could be distorted and misused? There is the nurturing mother archetype, which in its distorted form is the smothering mother, involved in every aspect of her children’s life, unable to let them mature and leave home. There is the mother-in-law energy that cannot let a favorite son be happy with a female who competes for his affection and attention. Or a young woman who diverts a male student’s attention from pure practice may be characterized by the religious community as the evil seductress.

The next parable is a subtle example of what misuse of power by a woman teacher might look like.

A second parable

Sumaya is a teacher at a large spiritual center. Traditionally the teacher picks a single promising student to be her personal attendant. This is a position of honor and an unequalled opportunity to train, since the attendant has intimate contact with the teacher many hours a day. Sumaya picks Jon, a bright, energetic young man, and trains him rigorously. As several years go by she comes to depend upon him absolutely.

Jon is available to her any hour she may need him, and carries out her requests more efficiently than anyone else she has trained. She has tested his loyalty during several difficult times at the center. There was a minor but unpleasant episode involving students who were discontent, and who had stirred up unrest in the community. They eventually left. She was more shaken by this than anyone except her attendant knew. When she had Jon transfer funds secretly to cover a blunder by the treasurer, he mentioned it to no one. He was completely discreet about the few times she had slipped, doing and saving things she was not proud of. He is the only one she feels safe in confiding to about her occasional doubts that she is not suited for this work.

Jon has had several significant spiritual “openings” and she is beginning to hope he will someday be her successor. She has hinted this to him, but not told him outright lest he become “puffed up.”

Jon was delighted to be chosen as Sumaya’s personal attendant. It is hard work, but more than balanced by what he can learn by watching how Sumaya puts realization into action. He is happy to carry out her wishes, and gains particular pleasure by anticipating her needs a moment before even she is aware of them. Sumaya says he is the best attendant she has ever had, and has hinted that he is making such progress he might be head of the center when she retires.

Jon was upset when a small group of students complained about Sumaya in a community meeting. How could students with so little experience of practice and so little clarity in the Way criticize what the teacher perceives as best for them all? He knew she was not the dictator they portrayed her as, and that she carefully considered what was best before taking action. It did bother him that she had asked him to put pressure on them in various ways, until they felt it necessary to leave the community. He had tried to translate her exact words, uttered when she was understandably upset, into a more moderate and less hurtful message. It had had the desired effect: the troublemakers were gone, and peace was restored to the community as Sumaya had wished.

Cultural differences

There is a myth in spiritual communities that cultural differences can excuse inappropriate behavior. If an Asian teacher gets drunk or is sexual with students, it is attributed to cultural misunderstanding. But in fact, when we consult our elders in the Buddhist tribe, whether the Buddha, Dogen Zenji, Aa Chan or the Dalai Lama, we find that sexual abuse of students and drunkenness have always been recognized as harmful.

To excuse abuse of students by saying that it is a cultural misunderstanding is like excusing child abuse by saying that the perpetrator was him/herself abused. It may help to raise a more compassionate response to the abuse, but it does not excuse it. The

perpetrator is still responsible for exploiting children and the teacher for exploiting students, no matter what his or her background. The majority of men and women who were themselves abused do not go on to become abusers. Many teachers raised in different cultural settings do not go on to abuse students. To use the cultural excuse is a subtle insult to the many teachers from other cultures who do not abuse.

Child sexual abuse is harmful because it disrupts, often permanently, the stages in a child's development necessary for healthy sexuality as an adult. Spiritual abuse of students is similarly disruptive, with the result that some students never mature in spiritual practice and others are turned away from the Dharma forever. Is this the outcome we want as teachers?

Some child molesters love the innocence of children, a purity they feel they lack. They try to take this energy unto themselves by sexual union with the child. Similarly, when a Dharma teacher becomes harried and jaded, with no time for practice and renewal, the innocent love of a new student for the Dharma is a balm. A young student's openings awaken memories of the teacher's own enthusiasm and awakening experiences. The aging teacher may try to replenish depleted spiritual energy vicariously through the student, sometimes in the form of sexual union.

We teachers are vulnerable to our own greed, anger, and ignorance, as well as to our capacity to rationalize what we want to do. But it is our duty to ask, "Am I doing this for the student's benefit or for my own?" Who is being served if a student is French kissed by a teacher in interview? One good test is whether the teacher would apply the behavior to most or all students. Do the old women, fat women, and male students get French kissed too?

Another good test is whether our acts are consistent with what the Buddha taught. Could our behavior be exposed, as it was in the time of the Buddha, to the scrutiny of the sangha? Our misbehavior is no secret from ourselves. And as Buddhist teachers, we must also know that, in the One Mind, there are no secrets at all.

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Library Café

LIBRARY CAFÉ UPDATE

Videos

Hear Their Cries: Religious Responses to Child Abuse. Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. A docudrama on the role of clergy in the prevention of sexual abuse.

Not in My Church - Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. A docudrama to help people deal with the problem of clergy misconduct involving sexual abuse in the ministerial relationship.

Promesas Quebrantadas - Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. Este video enfatiza la importancia de la religion y la espiritualidad, las cuales son esenciales para el movimiento en contra de la violencia domestica.

Bless Our Children - Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. A video outlining what churches and faith communities can do to address child sexual abuse.

Wings Like a Dove: Healing for the Abused Christian Woman - Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. Deals sensitively, biblically and helpfully with the problems faced by many Christian women experiencing abuse.

Once You Cross the Line: A training tape on preventing clergy misconduct and sexual abuse in the ministerial relationship. - Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence.

Books

Family Violence and Religion: An Interfaith Resource Guide - Volcano Press, Volcano, CA. 1995.

Abuse and Religion: When Praying Isn't Enough. - Horton, Anne L. & Williamson, Judith A. Lexington Books, Lexington, MA 1988.

Clergy Misconduct: Sexual Abuse in the Ministerial Relationship: A Workshop Manual. -Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence.

A Clergy Abuse Survivor's Resource Packet - Center for Women and Religion Graduate Theological Union, 1992

Child Sexual Abuse: A Teaching Manual for Clergy and other Christian Leaders - Whitman, D. Mitchell. Christian Counseling and Consultation International. 1988

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