

The Silent Words

Incest - Rape - Molestation

Prelude:

I sit here in this room preparing to speak to this group of people, pondering my thoughts about my past running through my head and heart; it is deeply embedded in my soul. I feel so alone and secluded in this tiny room. Will I be afraid? Will I have the need to run and hide? Will I be voiceless as I look into the faces of these people? Will they understand and listen to my words? Will there be disbelievers, perpetrators or even victims? How will they feel about the words I speak? Deep within my thoughts, I hear a knock, then a deep baritone voice bringing me back to reality. The voice announces I have five minutes.

Incest, rape and molestation are words that dictionaries, doctors or even posters describe in vibrant text or color, but they offer no real clue to the impact on the victims of such horrific crimes. Even judges and juries tend to forget the victims as they give a menial sentence to the guilty ones. These sexual offenders sometimes receive a slap on the wrist or probation. Rarely do they receive hard jail time unless they are repeat offenders. That is so disturbing that they have to invade and alter the lives of so many before being punished. These sexual offenders live in our communities, our homes, and sometimes our jails. They work in our restaurants and schools, drive school buses, and even serve in our places of worship. They do not look as you think they may. In fact they may look like your grandfather, dad, uncle, brother or even neighbor. Most of them live in homes just like you and I, and they have jobs. They enjoy warm meals, soft beds and televisions to watch. They enjoy everything society has to offer. These predators are sometimes among society's highest elite: people you are supposed to be able to take your

problems to and be able to trust, like doctors, lawyers, teachers, police officers, or even priests.

I am one of those human beings who has been consumed by all of these silent words, these crimes. I am a victim of both my family and society's elite. The pain and agony I have endured is worse than torture. They took over not only my body, but my mind, life and soul. As I see it, there was very little punishment for my abusers. I, on the other hand, the victim, live a life-long punishment, worried as I walk through every door or down every stairwell and street. I carry the feeling of guilt and filth for their horrendous crimes. I know we cannot go back and change the past, but somehow we must and will change the future, not only for ourselves but for the victims of the future.

I have lived my life with hurt and pain. As a child, I endured the wicked edge of a stick, the sharp edges of a knife, the thick cutting corners of a leather belt. After all that, I thought it would be through. Then came the verbal and emotional attacks and overwhelming sexual abuse, not perpetrated by one but by many. It dropped me to my knees with tears in my eyes and pain in my gut. I then decided to eat my way to oblivion thinking maybe this would solve the problem, and I thought that I could start to make better choices when I became an adult.

That would not be the case. I continued the pattern of abuse. Through bad marriages and beating myself up emotionally, I have been my own enemy and worst critic, allowing such evil into my life by not standing up for myself. I can still hear the slaps from my husband ringing through my ears and his harsh words cutting through my heart. Just as people experience déjà vu, I still get flashbacks where I can remember exactly how pungent my

freshly singed hair smelled. I began abusing myself through alcohol and drugs to mask the problems I was trying to hide or forget, and I only ended up more depressed.

Then I began to think. I needed to regain some self worth and begin being there for myself, as I had always meant to. Then yet again, I attached to yet another man whom I allowed to control and run me like a fine piece of machinery. The wicked words, cutting hands, burning hair, and rape continued for another nine years. I could only despair in my own sorrow and pity, hiding behind stairs and in closets, reminding myself I could not divorce. I believed it was against God's wishes and I thought my children would suffer. Ultimately, even though I did not try to, I was putting them through everything I had gone through and had wanted to stand against.

In my life, I have seen traits of incest in my family starting generations ago. Passed down like a family tradition, the abuse started with my great-grandfather abusing my grandfather, then my grandfather abusing my mother and his granddaughter, which is me. My uncle raped me. My brother also entered the tradition and molested me. It does not stop there. I was drugged and raped at a party, then raped by a police officer. I was too afraid to speak up, as somehow I felt I deserved it and it was all my own fault. Many of my abusers threatened me with my life and my family's lives, although they did not need to make the threat as I continued to abuse myself through alcohol, drugs, anorexia, and bulimia.

I still sometimes allow these perpetrators to control parts of my life and pull me away from the ones I love and the ones who love me. Through the years, I have learned that my words of hurt and pain are the unspoken words that are to be kept

secret. Most people choose not to hear my words, as if they were the plague and they could catch it.

I still have the horrendous dreams of torture and pain that never seem to go away or end. I can close my eyes and see and feel all the touches of the violation of my whole human being. I have gone through therapy, but it can never take away all I have endured. The many men who perpetrated such pain and hurt against me took so much of my heart and soul.

As for my parents, well, they choose not to speak of it or maybe they somehow feel guilty for not being the parents and keeping their child safe. Although I cannot speak to my parents about my violation and rape, my mother has started to discuss hers. I sometimes think she still hurts so deeply that it's hard for her to accept her own pain, much less feel guilty for not being there to protect me, her daughter.

My children are still filled with those same tears and anger, because they were without a mom just like I had been, because I had given up the fight long after it had begun. I was afraid of changes because I was so used to the past. It seemed easier to be amongst the abuse and tribulation, but it was harder and healthier to run past it to new pastures of love.

Letting go of an unhealthy relationship is like letting go of trust, because the old is something you know well and can comprehend. Sometimes, the harsh reality is death if you don't get out. I was so depressed that I hit rock bottom and attempted suicide. Then I had to learn to love and accept myself from within, build on reality and my strength, and fight the urge to enmesh in the abuse. I realized I deserved a life of happiness and

to win my emotional battles. Then I started to enjoy days of peace, freedom, and happiness, even though I did not know what that was until I first experienced it.

I believe that victims of these silent words deserve to accept themselves, their accomplishments, their values, and to love themselves. Once we are able to accept the above, then we may accept the touches of another human being, touches that are caring, caressing and loving. This will be new and we may flinch and fight, but as with any new experience, it will slowly become normal and exciting to all of us. So our future holds true with bright skies and rays of brilliant lights. It is not just a fantasy future, but also a reality within us.

Let's not forget us, the silent and quiet ones, the victims of torture beyond one's imagination. We are the violated ones who sometimes are afraid to be heard. We seem to be far into the distance, out of reality and the general population. On the news or in police reports, we are called the Jane and John Does in order to protect our identities. There are the family and friends of the victims who often suffer from pain, heartache and sometimes deep down guilt because they chose to turn the other way or were not aware. In either case, they suffered from their inability to help.

I sit and think and know they do research into why abusers do these things, but I don't believe it is enough. There needs to be more in-depth research as I see this as a bigger problem than alcohol or drugs. I have heard some call it an illness or a disease, but I call it sheer torture and murder of the mind, body, and soul. I have lived through enough abuse that I should not be here. As of today, I still suffer but I am

choosing to fight back through words on paper, through new legislation, and through advocating on behalf of those little voices who are yet too afraid to be heard.

Closing thoughts:

I finally steady myself and stand with my eyes wide open I slowly walk out of the room, As I look back while closing the door I see that the room is actually large. It suddenly hits me that I am leaving my safe and secluded era behind. I walk slowly and hesitantly out towards the stage. My hands are wringing wet as I rub them together. My stomach clenches as if there are daggers stabbing me. I arrive at the stage. I realize I only have four steps to reach the top. I walk up each step. Step one: I am safe. Step two: I am secure. Step three: I am strong. Finally, on the fourth step, I know I am free to be me. I walk with deliberation towards the podium. I get stronger and taller with each step. When I get to the podium I am standing tall, no longer slouching. I look out into the audience, which is greeting me with applause. It finally hits me that it is time to tell the world all about me and its okay...