

Commentary

Victim, perpetrator of sexual assault on the cycle of violence

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I am a victim of sexual assault and a perpetrator. I knew my perpetrator and my victim knew me.

I was 8 years old the first time I remember being victimized. I didn't report anything because I hadn't known that I was assaulted. We went from innocent horsing around to role playing to "what's going on?"

It was awkward, uncomfortable and shameful. Too shameful to look back on so I carried on like nothing had happened, until it happened again and again.

Like drinking is more acceptable in a bar with dim lights and cigarette smoke, what was happening to me was more acceptable with the dirty magazines and pornographic videos my friends and I got into. Not only that, one of my friend's parents owned a strip bar a block away from our elementary school and we would sneak around the alley to peak into the girls changing room.

Looking back, I was introduced to sex and other intoxicating influences too early in life. By the time I was 15, the hormones that run an average teenager wild were coursing through me with little to no restraint. I was steeped in a deviant milieu, which had become normalized for me and my friends.

At that age, it all made sense: what had happened to me when I was 8 was sort of a rite of passage, an unspoken initiation into the hedonistic culture of death. I hadn't seen myself as a

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victim but more as an unwilling participant who as a teen was now acting out his participation.

Does violence beget violence? I believe it did for me.

I recall a fun childhood interrupted by shame, fear, anger, and violence. It all seemed to run together, like fun and violence were opposite ends of the same stick.

I used this stick to measure my life with those around me, and sad to say, I viewed my life as normal.

My victim is a family member. The one who trusted me and loved me, who I was supposed to protect and love as myself - I sexually assaulted.

At the time, though I knew it was wrong, I reasoned that it was no more wrong that what had happened to me.

My conscience was the voice of an 8-year-old who had seen too much too soon and was living in a house of mirrors. Normal for me was, "if it feels good, do it".

Not every victim of sexual assault victimizes others. One brother of mine did while the other didn't.

Living in a culture of death, however, does victimize everyone and it makes it easier for

perpetrators to hide in plain sight. Why? Because we become so desensitized to violating sexual norms in our quest to liberalize society that we trivialize who we are as children of God and make mockery of the sacred.

Sex is a sacred act. Until we restore the sacredness of sex in our lives, victims will abound and perpetrators will look a lot like the person in the mirror.

As a victim of sexual assault, I have forgiven the person who hurt me. I live in that forgiveness and enjoy a peace I never knew before.

As a perpetrator of sexual assault, I seek forgiveness from the victim of my crime. I live for the day when we can be reconciled beyond human means.

My choices have made me the person I am today, and for that, I am both sad and glad. I am sorry that I participated in the culture of death, but as a survivor, I am eager to spread the good news of the culture of life and the sacredness of sex.

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