

Children and Women Should Not Be Victims- They Are Experts by Experience

Alice Walker begins the story of a woman-

"Dear God, I am fourteen years old. I have always been a good girl."

Women are raised to be good girls, children in blossoming bodies, directed to follow the images and directives of a still-paternalistic society, where the word victim is synonymous with women and children. Good manners, obedience, silence are the hallmarks of a socialization that lays the groundwork for victimization by those who capitalize on the assets of the well behaved. Questioning, assertiveness, independent thought and precocious intellectual development are qualities that are too often quashed in children, who then can become easy prey for child predators or obsessed women abusers.

Aggressive but confidential public advocacy is necessary for victims wallowing in misery, helplessness, fear of reprisal and submission. Painting a public picture of pain and suffering exacerbates the problem, further victimizes the victim and feeds the perpetrator community. Abusers want to hurt and inflict pain and fear, in order to have a sense of control and power. Unfortunately, public stories of abuse sometimes teach how to abuse. Stories feed the imagination of perpetrators who can then plan, refine their craft and teach others in their bizarre community.

The ranks of the disenfranchised in our society still include women and children whose voices are silenced by excuses. The old saws need to be discredited, extinguished: "women are vindictive and manipulative". "Children are children; they don't know what they've seen, heard, thought, experienced, believe". "They're making it all up." It couldn't happen in such a nice family."

At the Foundation for the Child Victims of the Family Courts, we do not think so! We help children and women talk specifically about what has happened, in confidence, until the problem is solved legally and emotionally. As experts, we know who we are dealing with and what the outcome must be to resolve that which has been experienced, legally and emotionally. The suffering, and the solution to the suffering, must rise above the cacophony of "victim chatter". The ability to learn from experience, to transform a crushing personal event into an event that crushes the adversary, then giving rise to new life, personal liberty, and the pursuit of an environment free from harm must become an opportunity, the outcome of the terrible events sometimes presented in life.