

Good morning, my name is Peri Stitzel, I am a resident in Kentwood Michigan and have come here today to ask you to vote affirmatively for bills 29 and 30.

In my opinion, abusers of children, whether they are 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th degree offenders, need to be aware, if they become a repeat offender their chances of doing more time than before is a certainty.

When an offender is released from jail or prison, they are being given another chance at life, they are free from the bonds which held them. Not so for the victim.

The victim is never “free” from the bonds trauma places on them. Memories of the event or events that hurt them may dim but they are never very far from the surface.

I can attest to this because I am an adult survivor of child abuse. From the age of five when I was removed from daycare by my father without my mothers knowledge or consent to after my 13th birthday I lived in constant fear. The abuse started out with being hit, as I grew the physical abuse intensified, when puberty hit I was sexually abused until I was finally rescued and placed in a group home now known as Wedgwood Christian Services. By that time I had not only ungone physical beatings and punishments there was also the after affects of the emotional and mental torment I needed to deal with.

During the final four years I lived away from my father and his wife I was often verbally threatened over the phone with the possibility of having to return to them if they so chose, since they were the ones financially responsible for keeping me there.

I have never been able to forget what happened to me, and my body has triggers which automaticlly respond to certain stimuli. If while sitting at the kitchen table I sense someone too close behind me, I have often involuntarily flinched – this is the result of being hit on the back of the head with silverware, often, over a period of

years.

I find myself getting agitated when I become separated from my husband in a store and can't readily locate him – I believe this stems from the time I was made to get out of the car on a dirt road, and then abandoned there for over an hour – when my perpetrator returned I was laughed at for not having enough guts to run away when I had the chance.

I have never liked using gas stoves – having had my hands held against a kettle of boiling water with the flames of the stove very visible, until my hands blistered is the reason for that.

Night terrors plagued me for years – my daughter was having a sleep over with some friends one night when one of the girls was woke up by the sound of screaming. “Its ok” my daughter told her, “that’s just my mother having a nightmare.” During those bad dreams, with my eyes open, I believed I saw the dark figure of someone reaching down towards me or my sleeping husband. My husband became very adept at bringing me back around to a waking state. The odor of a particular chewing gum reminds me of torture done in the bathroom.

I don't like windows on outside doors, too easy to break an enter. Glancing into the corners of a room brings back memories, as does looking on a wicker chair.

Seemingly innocent settings or items can often bring to the surface memories that have lain dormant.

But the worst trauma which plagues me to this day, is the result of the sexual abuse I endured.

I was unaware of how badly this had damaged my psyche until my wedding night. It was then, when my husband tried to make love to me I realized I did not enjoy being touched intimately. In fact, I freaked out. Having an annual breast exam at my doctors office is a

torturous test of endurance, being positioned for a mamogram brings on attacks of anxiety.

As an adult I did try counseling but the fear over what had been done to me was so great I have never been able to get past it. It is as if I am haunted by a hound from hell.

On top of that, I have had physical pain since my late 20's, the aftermath of being kicked and hit – which resulted in nerve damage in my lower back and spine.

The damage done to me, and countless others like myself has lifetime effects. I have never been able to lock up the aftermath effects the abuse had on me, I have had to learn to live with it.

When I was a teen I went to Grace Adventures (formerly Grace Youth Camp) in Mears Michigan for a week. It was there I heard of someone who had had it far worse than I. Jesus Christ had been beaten with sticks, I'd only had bread boards broken on my bottom, his head had thorns pierce his skull, only my facial skin tore after my head was shoved into a toilet and held there while I struggled to breath, his hands had nails pierce them, mine were only blistered. When I learned that He had gone thru this abuse for me, I wanted him for my Savior, and asked him to be so.

Because of this decision, I didn't grow up to be an abuser. He changed my life, helped me to take what has happened to me and use it to help others. I have shared my story in a variety of venues, from one on one conversations in small groups, to speaking engagements, and by the writing of this book (From Broken to Beautiful) which was published last October by Amazon.

By increasing the sentencing guidelines for repeat offenders, you will be making the punishment more adquatly fit the crime, and you will provide valuable time needed during those first months and

years afterwards for the victim and their families.

My father and his wife were never punished by the law because by the time I was emotionally ready to press charges I was told too much time had elapsed. I had to wait for them both to die to feel completely safe.

There is a saying in this country: "Make America Great Again", I am asking you to "Make America Safe Again" because in voting bills 29 and 30 into existence, you will be one step closer to making that cliché a reality.

Thank you for allowing me this time,

Sincerely,

Peri Stitzel
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