

## Human Rights Violations of Torture: Survivor Art and Discussion

Jeanne Sarson and Linda MacDonald © April 2011

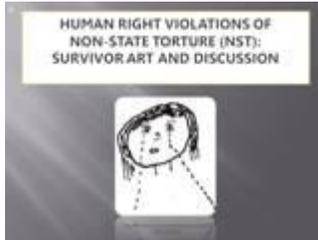


Figure 1: Drawing by Sara\*

This presentation was sponsored by Nuri Guerra in her beautiful art gallery, Visual Voice Fine Art, in Truro, Nova Scotia. Sharing the gallery space with us for the evening was the work of other artists Nuri had displayed quietly on the walls with sculptures sitting gracefully on the sidelines. Nuri is also an artist and owns a Graphic Design & Marketing business, Visual Voice. “Every Visual has a Voice. Say it Right” is her tagline. Check out Nuri’s website: [www.visual-voice.ca](http://www.visual-voice.ca). Linda and I thank Nuri for her support of this presentation.

“Every Visual has a Voice. Say it Right” is a very fitting slogan as it also applies to our presentation of the art and the drawings of nine different individuals – eight women and one man. Three of the women are professional artists. Through their art and their drawings they speak their visual voices telling of the torture they endured and of their tremendous efforts to gain their healing and freedom. For Linda and I saying it right is important also. Working in activist partnership with the artists who have shared their art and drawings have made it possible to present a visual art story of themes showing what non-state torture victimization means. The art and drawings also illustrate the intentionality and torture tactics of the non-state torturers.



Figure 2: Linda introduction of presentation

**Theme 1 ~ A Human Rights Violation:** We began the power point presentation by explaining that non-state torture (NST) is a violation of human rights under article 5 of the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Article 5 states that “no one shall be subjected to torture”. Copies of the Declaration were later distributed.

**Theme 2 ~ Who are the Non-State Torturers:** It was explained that non-state torturers are fathers and mothers, grandparents, other like-minded relatives and non-relatives and they often have community or professional positional power. They are nurses, doctors, social workers, counsellors, lawyers, police persons, politicians, in communications; they come from every walk of life in countries such as Canada, the United States, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

**Theme 3 ~ Silencing:** Their art spoke of how they were tortured to never tell what they were enduring this drawing and comment states. The baby booties are a symbolic statement of how young the artist and drawers could be and some were when their NST victimization began. This slide was supported with the information that special police units and researchers

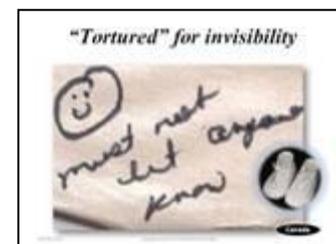


Figure 3: Another drawing by Sara

are stating that 20 to 26% of the pedophilic ‘pornographic’ images they are seeing involve acts of torture.

**Theme 4 ~ Attempts to destroy:** The art and drawings of the women and man depicted the torturer’s intentional efforts to destroy their personhood – efforts that, for some, began in their infancy. These slides included art works illustrating a loss of identity. One artist painted “Broken” and to show how NST “Rips your soul apart”. She also painted “Scream” and explained that no one listened to her when she cried out as a child so she screamed inside. This painting was a depiction of how the scream looked from within her-Self. Several other drawings were images of psychological torture and internalized ‘evilism’ anxiety. We shared how the torturers forced children to believe they are “evil”, “bad”, “good for nothing” or “rubbish”.

**Theme 5 ~ Rape:** Three paintings took the audience into the depths of how pedophilic rape destroys, including how the torturers used bestiality as another form of sexualized human-animal torture. Several drawings depicted the terror, horror and torture pain of family/gang raping.

**Theme 6 ~ Self-Destruction:** The drawing “Cleaning the dirt off” showed Self-cutting being done because the artist was forced to believe that evilness existed inside of her as a result of reproductive torture. She thought if she cut this would let the evilness out and then someone would care about her. This cutting was also accompanied by not eating for the same reason. The artist states she developed anorexia because of this belief of internalized evilness.

**Theme 7 ~ Homemade Torture Tools:** A collage of images depicted for the audience 128 everyday objects used as torture tools in the home. Toilets and buckets of water became water torture tools. Cigarettes were used for burning, knives and razor blades for cutting, pins for puncturing, boards and belts for hitting and whipping. Ropes and handcuffs inflicted immobilization torture. Pillows were for suffocation torture. Hammer handles and screw drivers and other objects such as



Figure 4: Jeanne speaking

plastic animal toys were transformed into tools used for raping. The drawings of three other women illustrated specific images of water torture and immobilization, whipping and animalization tortures. Animalization tortures are brutalities inflicted that treat the child like an animal.

**Theme 8 ~ Torturing Holidays:** One drawing introduced the reality that non-state torturers use holidays as a time when they have free access to engage in prolonged torture victimization of the children who are vulnerable and captive within such family/group systems.

**Theme 9 ~ The Re-Construction of Self:** Four empowering drawings and art illustrated the efforts of women re-gaining their relationship with them Self. One artist spoke in her art of “My Best Day,” being “a portrayal of getting my power back. Taking control back by making decisions for myself and standing up for myself. It is a powerful feeling when I do what is best for myself and not what I am conditioned to do.”

**Theme 10 ~ “Looking Normal”:** This painting was the final piece of art and closed the educational presentation.

**Theme 11 ~ Was Open Discussion and Sharing What is Needed:** Very briefly the topics included

1. Human rights and the UN meaning of torture
2. Social inclusion – meaning that women and men so tortured need to be and feel accepted by the global community and have their NST ordeals believed and not be blamed or pathologized for the torture they survived.
3. Naming of non-state torture (NST)
4. The need for the criminalization of NST in the *Canadian Criminal Code*
5. Education of all systems within society
6. Protection and investigation services need specific attention
7. Prosecution to prevent the non-state torturers from enjoying impunity
8. Prevention via education and how destructive media and pornographic images can be including torture-porn snuff (sexualized killing images)
9. Language, for example, challenging the phrase used so often in the media when reporting pedophilic rape as being “sex with a child” – adults never have sex with a child – never – it is always a crime.



Figure 6: Linda, Jeanne and Nuri

We enjoyed a very respectful discussion with those in attendance and appreciated all their comments.

We have a special thank you for the women and man who so openly shared their art and drawings, to work in activism partnership with us, to make this presentation possible.

*Jeanne & Linda*

[www.nonstatetorture.org](http://www.nonstatetorture.org)

\* Sara is a pseudonym.