

EMPOWERMENT: PARTNERSHIPS IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH, ACTIVISM, AND HEALING

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THE SEVENTH ANNUAL RITUAL ABUSE, SECRETIVE ORGANIZATIONS AND MIND CONTROL CONFERENCE

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This paper provides an outline of our presentation, "Empowerment: Partnerships in Participatory Research, Activism, and Healing", given at this Seventh Annual S.M.A.R.T. Conference. Our presentation was organized under the following topics:

1. Partnerships: "*The Many Faces of Torture*", The Side-Panel Presentation given at the 48th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters, New York City, March 1-12, 2004.
2. Sharing What We Learned: The Outcome Statement
3. Ritual Abuse-Torture: Torture and Human Trafficking
4. Interventions: Empowerment, Participatory Research, Activism, and Healing

Partnerships: "*The Many Faces of Torture*" The Side-Panel Presentation Given at the 48th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

A Brief Review: When we presented at the Sixth S.M.A.R.T. Conference in 2003 we shared an overhead entitled "Our Dream". It stated our dream was to have ritual abuse-torture, which is committed by "non-state actors", acknowledged by the UN as a form of torture; thus, breaking the silence and making a safer world for children and for all persons who have been so victimized. Each year, June 26th, is recognized by the UN and memorialized around the world by human rights activists as the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. This year we are here to state we are one step closer to realizing this possibility as we were invited by Dana Raphael, PhD, Director of the Human Lactation Center Ltd., CT, who was seated in the audience last year, to be participants in a side-panel presentation at the 48th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), at the UN Headquarters, New York City, March 1-12, 2004. The side-panel presentation was possible because the Human Lactation Center Ltd. is a non-governmental organization (NGO) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

The Side-Panel Presentation: On March 8th, International Women's Day, as part of side-panel presentation entitled, "*The Many Faces of Torture*", we joined Jeanette Westbrook, who spoke as a survivor of ritual abuse-torture, Helen McGonigle, who provided a legal perspective, and Randall Marshall, who presented medical research about brain responses and traumatic stress. Dana Raphael facilitated the presentation which was so very well received.

Our presentation at the 48th CSW Session focussed on ritual abuse-torture from various perspectives which were:

1. **Explaining how we became involved** which happened in 1993 when we answered a late-night telephone call. A woman we did not know said she was preparing to kill her-Self in four days. Eventually, this connection led to her asking us to help her exit the ritual abuse-torture family/groups which she reported she had been born into and remained a captive enslaved woman. Unable to find knowledgeable or willing support for her we have continued to provide educational, healing, and caring guidance and support to her as well as learn from her.
2. **Sharing our thematic definition and research** into ritual abuse-torture in Nova Scotia. We highlighted ten thematic acts that are part of our "Model of Ritual Abuse-Torture" that describe the organized crime of ritual abuse-torture committed by families/groups which occurs "in-house" and "on-site". The ten thematic acts are:
 - a. child abuse
 - b. terrorization
 - c. cruelty to animals
 - d. torture of all forms
 - e. rampageous pedophilia
 - f. necrophilism and pedophilic necrophilic acts
 - g. violent ritualisms of group bonding
 - h. horrification
 - i. enforced suicidal and other Self-harming acts
 - j. trafficking and other forms of exploitation
3. **Identifying Canada's knowledge and inaction** as Canada has ignored national findings reported by the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women (1993) which stated:
 - a. Women from every region of Canada reported having survived ritual abuse and torture
 - b. Therapeutic help was extremely difficult to find
 - c. Persons who have survived do not have equal benefits and protection under the law as other Canadian citizens
 - d. effective helpers become targets of the perpetratorsThus Canada has not taken responsibility or respected, protected, or fulfilled, or upheld its human rights obligations to the victimized girl and boy child or captive enslaved woman, nor practiced the standard of

due diligence, nor devised a system to hold the ‘non-state actors’—the perpetrators of ritual abuse-torture—accountable.

4. **Explaining our global connections** that came as a result of receiving over 400 artifactual testimonies—poems, letters, drawings, photographs, paintings, and short stories—depicting the ritual abuse-torture ordeals of 61 people from six countries—Canada, Costa Rica, England, Germany, Scotland, and the United States. We mounted these artifactual testimonies in ten portfolio books to display during the side-panel presentation the 48th Session of the CSW. These portfolio books were displayed at this 2004 S.M.A.R.T. Conference for attendees to view.

Sharing What We Learned: The Outcome Statement

From our two weeks of hard work during attendance at the 48th CSW session we learned:

1. New language we will need to incorporate into our future work, for example, the term “non-state actors”. This UN term refers to perpetrators—the private individual or group, for instance, the RAT torturers—as non-state actors which differentiates them from “state actors”—the political or state-sanctioned torturers who torture because the country has a policy that supports the torturing of prisoners, for example.
2. Persons attending the CSW recognized and supported naming ritual abuse-torture as an emerging global issue and a new form of torture. The outcome that came from our participation in the side-panel presentation and in consultation with many activists was the publication of the following statement in the NGO Newsletter, *The World of Women*, (Issue # 4, March 12, 2004 viewable on-line at <http://www.peacewomen.org>). It basically reads:

We recommend ritual abuse-torture (RAT) be identified as an emerging human rights violation: that ritual abuse-torture be acknowledged as a newly recognized form of torture that is inflicted by non-state actors. Ritual abuse-torture is inflicted upon girls and boys, as young as infancy, and unto women. It involves planned and organized family and group [violent] rituals, abuse and torture as well as “off-street” in-home, regional, national and transnational trafficking and sexualized exploitation and modern day slavery. Ritual abuse-torture has the capacity to destroy the personality of the infant, toddler, child, youth or adult victim.

3. We estimate that we spoke with approximately 500 women and some men who were open and some especially supportive. Representatives from Canada, China, Geneva, India, Ireland, Taiwan, the United States, and

- from the International Service for Human Rights have offered to help us in the further work of having ritual abuse-torture recognized as a human rights violation.
4. We had the continuous opportunity to debunk the common misconception or myth that ritual abuse-torture is violence that happens in Africa.
 5. We also learned that the UN is very focussed on holding criminally responsible all persons who engage in the trafficking of persons—infants, toddlers, children, youth, and adults—who are rented, sold, and used for pedophilic sexualized violence or in acts that constitute modern day slavery, such as, in the pedophilic and adult “sex” trade. This focus presents an opportunity for exposing the human trafficking that occurs within ritual abuse-torture families/groups.
 6. We witnessed the values placed on the ten portfolio books that illustrated the testimonial evidence of the transnational crime of ritual abuse-torture. This evidence left the bystanders with no place to go except into acceptance of the reality and into a new worldview that ritual abuse-torture is real! We observed how government representatives to the UN spoke of the value of statistical information, thus, being able to present the 400 pages of artifactual works and participatory research findings was vital to the success of our presentation. It provided participatory research evidence of the universal violent themes that are committed by RAT perpetrators, vital information that will need to continue to be collected.

Ritual Abuse-Torture: Torture and Human Trafficking

In this part of our presentation we showed the universality of the acts of torture that are perpetrated by “state-actors” and “non-state actors” by sharing the “stories” of Sister Dianna Ortiz and Sara. Sister Dianna Ortiz became very visible when she told and wrote about being tortured by state actors. Sara, although she has given us permission to write and share her story of being tortured by non-state actors, remains invisible, as do many persons who have survived ordeals of ritual abuse-torture. Many, like Sara, are too frightened to expose them-Selves fearing society’s negative response to their stories of victimization by the ritual abuse-torture families/groups. We shared Sister Ortiz’s story as a way of demonstrating that Sara was subjected to similar acts of torture, only the torturers were non-state actors—a ritual abuse-torture family/group, whereas, Sister Ortiz’s perpetrators were reported to be state actors. Their stories are:

SISTER ORTIZ

Burned nearly 100 times with cigarettes; terrified; gang-raped; dogs used; horror; blood; suspended over a pit of the bodies of persons who had been murdered and persons who were still dying; a knife forced into her hands and held there by her torturers as they plunged it into another woman and this horror videotaped for blackmailing purposes; hearing the torturer’s “if you tell no one will believe you,”

statement; their laughter; humiliation—these are some of the over-whelming ordeals Sister Diana Ortiz reports were inflicted unto her during her 24-hour state of captivity by the Guatemalan army's counterinsurgency force, on November 2, 1989. Escaping back to the United States Sister Ortiz uncovers crucial information that convinces her of links between her torturers and the Guatemalan and U.S. governments.ⁱ

SARA

Burned with cigarettes, candles, hot light bulbs for more times than can be recorded; terrified; family/group/individually raped; suspended by her limbs; bestiality; horror; blood; forced involvement in real and/or sham murder rituals; a knife forced into her hands and held there by her torturers as they plunged it into another human being; horrified; horrors videotaped as trophies for future pleasures, for commercial trade on the pornography market, and for emotional blackmailing purposes; hearing the torturer's statement "if you live to tell no one will believe you,"; their laughter; humiliation—these are just a few of the over-whelming ordeals Sara describes experiencing during her 35-years of captivity and ritual abuse-torture by "the family". A co-culture of trans-generational kin and/or non-kin whose like-minded needs and desires for ritual abuse-torture (RAT) can be inter-connected regionally, nationally, internationally, and transnationally.ⁱⁱ

Also, this section of our presentation addressed, "Life: Ritual Abuse-Torture Families/Groups as Defined in UN Global Language". We discussed the crime of human trafficking. Which was a constant reality spoken of by the persons we helped and the women who participated in our participatory research project. Examples of human trafficking constantly appeared in the global artifactual testimonies sent to us by the 61 persons from six countries for the UN side-panel presentation. Overheads identifying various articles from the UN *Declaration on Human Rights* were included in this part of our presentation to demonstrate the repetitive human rights violations that infants, toddlers, children, youth, and captive enslaved women are subjected to by perpetrators of ritual abuse-torture. Below is the list of definitions that were discussed to demonstrate: Life: Ritual abuse-torture Families/Groups Defined in UN Global Language ...

1. A CHILD is a human being under the age of 18 years
... UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child*
2. EXPLOITATION is the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs
... *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*
3. CHILD PORNOGRAPHY is any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primary sexual purposes; and,

CHILD PROSTITUTION is the use of the child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration

... The *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography* (2000).

4. TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS is recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by threat, force, coercion, abuse of power, position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits ... for purpose of exploitation

...*Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*

5. TRAFFICKERS ... recruiters; transporters; those who exercise control over trafficked persons; those who transfer and/or maintain trafficked persons in exploitative situations; those involved in related crimes; and those who profit either directly or indirectly from trafficking, its component acts and related offences.

... The report of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, "*Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking*"

6. TORTURE ... The Committee Against Torture has recently considered specific forms of torture, including trafficking in women, as part of a gender-sensitive interpretation of the Convention and in particular torture as it is defined in Article 1: "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as ...

... The *Convention Against Torture* (1987, June 26)

7. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (VAW) ... any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life ... physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution.

... The General Assembly

Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Article 1 and 2

8. ORGANIZED CRIMINAL GROUP ... a structured group of three or more persons ... aim of committing one or more crimes ... in order to obtain, directly, or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit.

... UN *Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (2000)

Additionally, we showed overheads of the information obtained on the Guest map that is on our web site. These overheads showed the trafficking patterns of perpetrators of ritual abuse-torture as well as the destination countries identified by survivors who shared this important information. Destination countries identified were:

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| 1. Antarctica | 10. Israel |
| 2. Australia | 11. Italy |
| 3. Belgium | 12. Japan |
| 4. Canada | 13. Mexico |

- | | |
|------------|-------------------------------|
| 5. Denmark | 14. New Zealand |
| 6. England | 15. Paradise Islands, Bahamas |
| 7. France | 16. UK |
| 8. Germany | 17. United States |
| 9. Holland | 18. Wales |

We also discussed, briefly, via overheads, the global perspective of organized pedophilic criminal groups. Ritual abuse-torture families/groups were compared to other intentionally organized violent pedophilic groups such as the "Wonderland Club" or the "Russian Ring".

Interventions: Empowerment, Participatory Research, Activism, and Healing

The final topic of our presentation began with an intervention. We shared our opinion that there needs to be a paradigm shift in the meaning of the word empowerment. Historically, the word empower arose in the mid-17th century from the legalistic perspective meaning "to invest with authority, authorize." Shortly thereafter the more general usage came to mean "to enable or permit or to equip or supply with an ability." Later, empowerment became a word connected to movements. When used in this contextual way it gives the impression that participants are or are about to be given control or become more in control of their destinies. (<http://www.yourdictionary.com/ahd/e/e0118400.html> Downloaded July 15, 2004)

We practice from a new paradigm of empowerment based in equality versus this power-over legalistic authoritarian historical framework. In the context of our work, research, and writing empowerment means that both our-Selves and the other party are equal persons in the process with equal, although different, responsibilities and accountabilities to the partnering, healing, or research relationship. We view empowerment as **the creation of a mutually respectful relational environment:**

1. that mutually supports equality, growth, learning, struggles, successes, healing, freedom, rights, and justice for all persons involved ...
2. that fosters relational values such as mutual respect, trust, truth-telling ...
3. that shares personhood power ...
4. that respects boundaries ...
5. that fosters caring ...
6. that respects a person's voice ...
7. that challenges distortions, incongruencies, denials, rejections, ignorance ...

Another intervention is the use of participatory research practices. Participatory research is a process that involves:

1. **Asking questions and learning from the answers** so the learning can be transformed into **action-taking**.
2. **Groups of persons** who have **concerns** about their **specific community**, in this situation community is survivors of ritual abuse-torture and supporters, both with concerns about the on-goingness of ritual abuse-torture victimization that continues to be inflicted unto children of all ages—from infancy to youth—and onto captive enslaved women. As well, there is concern about public, organizational, and governmental systems that are not taking responsibility to respect, protect, fulfill, and uphold human rights obligations. Nor are they addressing their failure to practice with due diligence and their failure to devise a system to hold perpetrators accountable.
3. **Action-taking** means there are **intended outcomes** that come from the learning that contributes to **gaining practical knowledge** that can be **applied to everyday relationship** issues that will result in **empowerment of the members of the specific community**.

An overall example of the participatory research process comes from the 2003 S.M.A.R.T Conference. At this conference we briefly presented our ritual abuse-torture model which took us over five years of work to develop, followed by two years of research that included asking persons who had survived ritual abuse-torture for their input about the model. It was another three years of work before we decided to take the risk to present it at the 2003 conference. We asked attendees at the conference to participate in the evaluation of the model by filling in an “Evaluation and Feedback” form. The results, which follow, were based on the information provided by 25 people out of 85 (+/-) who attended the 2003 S.M.A.R.T Conference and who completed the “Feedback & Evaluation” form. Thus, the following responses represent the opinions of 29.5% of attendees.

Following are some of the questions and the results attendees provided on the “Feedback and Evaluation” form (2003):

1. Did the Model of Ritual Abuse-Torture help organize your thinking about Ritual Abuse-Torture? Yes: 23 (92%) No: 2 (8%)
2. Did the Model of Ritual Abuse-Torture help identify the behaviours of the RAT torturer(s)? Yes: 24 (96%) No: 1 (4%)
3. Did the Model of Ritual Abuse-Torture help organize the extensiveness of Ritual Abuse-Torture victimization? Yes: 24 (96%) No: 1 (4%)
4. Have you consistently considered RA to be:
 - a. Torture (RAT)? Yes: 21 (84%) No: 4 (16%)
 - b. A violation of the victimized person’s human rights? Yes: 23 (92%) No: 2 (8%)
 - c. Connected to organized crime? Yes: 16 (64%) No: 9 (36%)
 - d. The perpetrator’s expression of human evil actions? Yes: 24 (96%)
Unanswered: 1
5. Would the Model of Ritual Abuse-Torture be useful to you?
 - a. As an educational tool? Yes: 24 (96%) Unanswered: 1
 - b. As a healing tool? Yes: 22 (88%) No: 2 (12%) Unanswered: 1 (.04%)

c. As an assessment tool? Yes: 17 (68%) No: 2 (12%) Unanswered: 6 (24%)

By participating in the completion of the “Evaluation and Feedback” form attendees—survivors and supporters—shared their knowledge which, for example, demonstrated the reality that 84% stated they consistently considered RA to be torture (RAT). Thus, it is essential to recognize that persons so victimized—infants, toddlers, children, youth, or captive enslaved women—have endured or are still being enduring acts of torture perpetrated against them. Having this knowledge means that the care survivors require needs to acknowledge they are survivors of torture—ritual abuse-torture. Additionally, the need of supporters has to take into consideration as they have been witness to the horrors and suffering of survivors. Only when survivor’s reality is justly recognized and adequately named will they be able to attain not only respectful care but true justice. Truthful-based actions contribute to empowerment.

There was also a comments section included on the “Feedback and Evaluation” form. Twenty-one comments were written and we shared the following three:

1. “I realize now it is torture and a violation of rights. You broke my denial! Abuse is a more benign word than torture but torture is the correct term for what I experienced.”
2. “Can’t wait for your book [Neither can we!]
3. “Keep stating that RAT is a crime! It does take away stigma & labelling, should use visual aid of [a] pack of RAT’s eating cheese ...” In response to this comment we shared three “RAT” cartoons ... for reframing and using humour against the RATers as the comment suggested.

Activism and Advocacy

We closed our presentation with a few overheads showing, besides presenting at the 48th Session on the CSW, our activism and advocacy. We have participated, since 2003, in:

1. A community information session entitled, “*Ritual Abuse-Torture: A Human Rights Violation*”, which was sponsored by the Pastoral Ministry Committee, St. John’s Anglican Church in our home town of Truro, Nova Scotia, Canada. This group was open to signing a petition requesting action be taken to recognize ritual abuse-torture as a human rights violation and acknowledged as a form of torture that is inflicted by “non-state actors”.
2. The petition was sent, along with a letter and 15 signed statement from persons so victimized, to government Ministers in Canada and to persons, in Geneva, who are working for human rights requesting that action be taken to acknowledge ritual abuse-torture as a human rights violation.
3. We showed an overhead picture of Linda and her car with our website bumper sticker address www.ritualabusetorture.org which we and others in our community have attached to the bumpers of our cars.

In closing, we discussed a list of actions each of us can do, entitled:

WHAT EACH OF US CAN DO: Personally, in workplaces, & socially

RESPECT THE CHILD

WORK TOWARDS HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP SKILLS
ENLARGE OUR MULTI-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

ACCEPT THE UNDENIABLE.

KNOW OUR “isms.”

BE AWARE OF HOW THESE PERSONAL “isms” FORM BIASES WHICH
INFLUENCE OUR THINKING, OUR LANGUAGE & ACTIONS

UNDERSTANDING CAN FREE THE CHILD FROM THE PERPETRATOR'S
IMPRISONING LIE, “*If you tell no one will ever believe you.*”

USE TRUTH-REFLECTING LANGUAGE

BECOME SELF AWARE ABOUT OUR BELIEFS & EMOTIONS ABOUT
HUMAN EVIL

BE REALITY-BASED ABOUT THE EXTENSIVE VIOLENCE WHICH CAN
OCCUR WITHIN ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

PRACTICE CITIZENSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES & ACCOUNTABILITIES

PRACTICE CITIZENSHIP CARING

PRACTICE & EXPECT TRUTH, JUSTICE, & DEMOCRACY--promote
transparent processes.

EXPECT ORGANIZATIONS WITH MANDATES FOR THE PREVENTION OF
VIOLENCE TO INCLUDE AWARENESS ABOUT RAT & OTHER FORMS
OF TORTURE.

CITIZENRY & SOCIAL ACTIVISM

ⁱ Murphy, B. (2002). Nun's piercing memoir and her quest for the truth. *The Times*; Ortiz, D. , & Davis, P. (2002). *The Blindfold's eyes My journey from torture to truth*. New York: Orbis Books.

ⁱⁱ Sara (pseudonym) is working to share her “story” in our book, *The torturers walk among us*, a work in progress.

PERSONS AGAINST RITUAL ABUSE-TORTURE

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