

There is a saying that, 'if you're not reasonably disturbed or outraged by what's going on, you're not paying attention.' Well the world has not been paying attention to the scourge of torture inflicted on our girl children, and into adulthood, by family members and others who walk freely among us while committing serial, heinous acts of violation against innocent, defenseless children.

I have known Jeanne and Linda for several years as colleagues in the field of gender-based violence, in their crusade to define Non-State Torture in the Criminal Code so that the perpetrators might be held to account. But honestly, I had no idea, until I read this book. Now I understand.

The mission they have been on continuously for almost 30 years, to bring voice to these unspeakable acts of evil, and at great emotional, financial and social expense to themselves, is nothing short of (s)heroic.

Jeanne and Linda did not go searching for this issue lurking invisibly in the darkness of basements, garages, forests. This issue found them, in the form of Sarah, on the verge of suicide programmed in her by her family. The authors, healthcare professionals, couldn't not respond. This story and the countless others they have collected of women likewise tortured, has compelled them into an unwavering crusade to ensure the world knows, and more importantly takes action to prevent one more girl child from being systematically programmed into a life of being dispensable, disposable and irrevocably damaged for the evil intention and sick pleasure of adults who should be protecting them.

One might be tempted to think they know something about abuse of women and girls, founded in controlling patriarchal systems and persistent misogynistic world views thousands of years in the making. But even for someone working in the field, it is hard to imagine. And there is no other word that adequately and accurately describes the planned, methodical, purposefully soul-shattering acts of mental, emotional, physical and sexual cruelty the women in these stories recount. It is the very definition of torture.

The book is critical, ground-breaking, well-researched, and offers important models and templates for the long and arduous possibility for healing and restoring wholeness for those victimized. Amazing in their own resilience, Linda and Jeanne have literally been life-savers for desperate women with nowhere else to turn. As for justice- the authors stand with colleagues in the forefront of a global movement through the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women and the Every Woman Treaty to identify, investigate and put an end to these grotesque crimes. They have been fearless and persistent with the government of Canada to recognize this form of torture as a legitimate and heinous violation of the human rights of girl children. As they say, 'government after government, politician after politician, have brushed this off,' by failing to incorporate Non-State Torture as criminal behavior in the Criminal Code of Canada.

This is not an easy book to read. The temptation is to turn away. The stories, the years of anguish told through women's traumatized psyches and painstakingly held and witnessed by the authors, are heart wrenching and horrifying. But once the door has been opened, we can no longer look away. Linda and Jeanne have been immersed with the stories of hundreds of women in the ongoing search for legitimacy, "trying to drill through the social denial bedrock that fails to hear their [the women's] calls for help." My hope is this book will bring them new and committed allies in this quest.

For the women, whose very survivals have involved miraculous acts of unimaginable courage every single day, my heart is with you. It is my fervent prayer that the hearts of so many others will likewise be broken open and committed to change.

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