



Neighborhood Response (Rose)

I had a few different perpetrators of child sexual abuse, but the main one was someone that lived—my neighbor that lived across the street from me. And it happened between the ages of 13 and 16. This was like a trusted person on our block who spent a lot of time with, like, the younger women on our block. And, you know, he was like a 28-year-old man, and I was 13. And He was sort of seen as, like, this nicer, older guy, you know, who just hung out with, like, the teenagers on the block. He was seen as like pretty harmless. He still lived with his mother. He had like this very youthful persona. So I come into like, spending time with him through, just like, uh, other teenagers on my street. Then he had like proposed this idea of a secret relationship to me, and that's like how, you know, the abuse started, and it was, um, it was ongoing for three years, you know...

I didn't recognize it as abuse until I was in college and I actually... I started taking some Women's Studies classes. Well, before that I should say, like, I was pretty depressed and I didn't really know why, and I kind of had, you know, a sort of like a panic attack at school and like went to, uh, one of the school psychiatrists and that was the first time I talked about.... I spoke about that relationship like out in the open, really. And he referred me like right away to a really great therapist who I saw for two years afterwards and through being in therapy with her, and also being in these women's studies classes where we really started talking about like incest and abuse and... That education had really allowed me to start naming what had happened to me, you know. Or what was done to me, I should say.

You know, I didn't really feel comfortable telling my family for about a year... I talked to my parents about it. Um, I was afraid of them like blaming me and being angry. And when I finally did tell them they didn't really do anything about it. It's kind of been like this ongoing source of discomfort between us. I was sort of trying to figure out what to do, 'cause it took me a long time to work up to even talking to them, and when I finally did, and they weren't offering help or suggestions, it was really disheartening to me, you know.

And so I started to explore the legal options that I had, and basically I found that there was nothing. I mean, what was available to me was very minimal. My understanding is that there is some kind of a statute of limitations that would say that up ten years after the abuse ended, that I could press charges. And so if I had my really great therapist testify in court about how I hadn't come to terms with the abuse until later, like, there's a chance that the extension of time would be enough time that I would be able to press charges. But even if I did, the worst thing that would happen to him is that he would be put on some kind of probation.

And I knew that what was likely is that I would be put through quite a bit of, um blaming, you know... character assassination, and I was in particular really afraid of that because... .. I mean my abuse situation was very... My perpetrator, like, asked me questions and spoke to me in a way that almost, like, implied my own consent, like he was very careful with the way that he addressed me. And he had a lawyer... His best friend was a lawyer, who advised him, like, on how to keep it secret.

I mean, as you know, it's like the whole perfect victim thing, you know. It's not like this is like a case where it would be very cut and dry, because I was thirteen, he did actually like ask me, "is this ok," like the first time that he raped me, and I said, "yes," you know. And it had to do with





like a lot of just the psychological manipulation that was happening. And now like I'm on the path of really recognizing how it's not my fault at all, but I know that like in a court, you know, I don't have written evidence of it, and, more importantly, because I was also abused at another time for a few months by one of his friends, I could easily see, like, myself being painted as like this fifteen year old whore, you know, basically. And that's what would happen. I knew that.

So, I kind of gave up after I spoke to the Brooklyn D.A. and I also spoke to someone at my University. And it was just clear that the legal system was not the way to go.

After that there were two different sort of, you know, alternative justice things that happened. One is that I told a few of the parents on the block that I trusted, and I also asked my mom to tell a few people as well. Basically everyone that had like a younger daughter on the block was informed about this person, 'cause my thought was that if he was seen as an unsafe person, then at least someone in my situation, it wouldn't happen, you know, and—. And also, I know that like you know, my father, like, had also, the one interaction they've had since then was him basically saying, like, "I know what you did." You know, so, again, there was like the watchfulness, there's like that part that happened.

And then the other thing which has actually been more sort of satisfying to me in this weird way is that, some young men, like late teens/early twenties young men, on my block, found out about this because my younger sister, who spends time with them, like told some of them. One of them was my cousin, so, like, he knew. I told him personally. And they've just done like a series of things that are like pranks, almost. He has, like, this open top Jeep so they like, pissed in his car. I know they've, like, put, like, garbage on his lawn, just like really small things.

You know, I have to say, they're things that were actually, like, the most protected I've ever felt, you know, and the most, like, of a community response that I've ever gotten from it. Because, especially because, my parents, and even like my aunt and uncle that also lived on the block, didn't really do anything active, to deal with it. It was very relieving to me that there was some kind of response. And I don't want to say that, like, those things held him accountable, cause it's not like it, you know, balanced it out or something, at all. But, I don't know, it made me feel good. It made me feel like someone was, like, fighting back for me, and that was a good feeling.

