



Women's Justice Center * December 2014 * Centro de Justicia para Mujeres
PO Box 7510, Santa Rosa, CA 95407 * Tel. (707) 575-3150 * Vol 40



When the Bough Breaks . . .

"In the event of a decompression, an oxygen mask will automatically appear in front of you...If you are traveling with a child or someone who requires assistance, secure your mask on first, and then assist the other person."

Getting oxygen to the care giver first makes obvious and perfect sense. But, alas, when it comes to one of the most severe crisis a mother can face, the sexual abuse of a child, communities are too often doing the opposite, and denying mothers the very air they need for the long struggle ahead.

Most mothers are brought to their knees by the initial staggering and painful shock of finding out their child has been sexually abused. And since the abusers are usually someone known and trusted, the mother is further lashed by the intensity of betrayal and ensuing conflicts among family or friends. She launches into a desperate search for help in the unfamiliar labyrinth of service organizations, and things generally only get unforgiveably worse from there.

Instead of being treated as a person key to her child's recovery, and as a co-victim herself, the mother is more often treated as a co-perpetrator. Responders at every turn tend to ignore, isolate, and blame the mother, driving a dangerous wedge between mother and child, right at the time mother and child need each other most.

Blaming mothers has been a default reflex of societies for millenia, and with all its dire consequences, continues near unabated today.

From daily gossip to the halls of academia, "refrigerator mothers" are still blamed for autism. "Smothering mothers" were blamed for homosexuality. "Matriarchal" African American mothers have been wholesale blamed for black poverty and crime.

Dr. Peggy Drexler writes of her experience as a clinician at a renowned child psychiatry unit. "In case conference after case conference," she says, "It was always the mother who was held at fault for her child's problems. She was too close or too distant, too strict or too permissive, hadn't set clear enough boundaries, or was found wanting in the empathy, love or affection departments. Whatever the issue, it always pointed back to the mother."

Likewise, here in Sonoma County, in case after case, we've seen mothers near broken by the painful blame and shunning they receive when their child is sexually abused. In this newsletter, we follow the story of one Santa Rosa mother's experience, and of her untiring, heroic struggle to break through the wedge and help save her child.



Imagine, as you read, how powerful it could be, if first, we gave life affirming air to the mother.

When the Bough Breaks . . .

The following story of Anita, a Santa Rosa mother of three, reveals the often harsh attitudes and practices of professionals that threaten to undercut the bond between mother and child right when mother and child need each other most. It's a heartbreaking story we've heard over and over again. But it's also a heroic story as Anita perseveres, and finally prevails, in the fight for her daughter's safety, healing, and love.

All names and minor details have been changed to protect identities. The graphic is a stock photo. But the responses of the professionals are unchanged as the mother has told them to us.

Anita is a smart, hardworking, single mother of three children who came here from Mexico only eight years ago. Her easy facility with English, however, reveals how smoothly she's been able to blend the Latino and American cultures. When little Dolores, her youngest daughter, developed some behavioral problems, Anita didn't hesitate to quickly find her daughter a psychologist.

One day ten-year-old Dolores told the psychologist how a few years back a family friend had been sexually abusing Julia, her older sister. Instead of contacting the mother directly, the psychologist told Dolores that she should tell her mother, as if the message carried no more charge than a schedule change, and the mother was little more than a receptionist who would jot down the information and forget it.

So out of the blue, with Anita driving through rush hour traffic, Dolores piped up from the passenger seat and told her mother how her older sister had been repeatedly sexually abused by the family friend. Because of the detail, Anna knew immediately it was true, and her heart was crushed and broken in two.

When Anita was finally able to arrange a meeting with the psychologist a week later, the psychologist was matter of fact, and without further advice, simply said she would be making a report to police.

A police officer called the mother by phone to verify the report, and, he too had little else to say. Shortly thereafter, a detective called and spoke only with Julia, the victim, a 16-year-old, to schedule an interview with the girl at the Redwood Children's Center. There was no consulting with Anita, or any communicating with her at all, as if the

mother were merely the on-call transport who would fulfill her duty on whatever time the detective and child had chosen. The interview was set five whole weeks away, as if detectives had more far more pressing things to do.



Anita began frantically looking for help. Since the revelation, Julia had turned angry and aggressively blaming Anita for everything under the sun. Anita took Julia to the local rape crisis center. There, Julia was assigned to a counselor, though Anita would have to pay for this, they said, because the assaults hadn't yet been proven.

Anita also asked for counseling for herself, to help her navigate through this. But she was told she would have to pay for that, too, and she couldn't afford to pay for both. As desperately as she needed guidance and help with her daughters, Julia's care came first.


During that first month, with police, psychologists, and counselors all abandoning Anita to fend for herself, she says, "I was going to bed crying every night, and waking up the next morning crying".

Still Anita persevered. She picked up the phone and called the detective hoping for information and help there. The detective told Anita that nothing could be done until after the interview; the interview which was still weeks away. Then, in a sinister turn, the detective asked Anita if she was trying to push the situation just so she could get a U-Visa.

Anita had never heard of a U-Visa, but she understood clearly the detective was implying the sex abuse claim might be viewed as a fraudulent attempt on Anita's part to get some advantage, and that as the mother, she had better back off. Anita was devastated.

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BILINGUAL COMMUNITY TREASURES

Danielle's World View

Somewhere between growing up in Cupertino and attending college at SSU, Danielle came to wrap her mind around a wide-ranging whole world view.

Fortunately for all of us, as her final step before being awarded her degree in global studies,

Danielle is doing her internship here at Women's Justice Center. She's also volunteering

at the Living Room, a Santa Rosa resource center for homeless women. Along the way, Danielle has turned her sights around and discovered a passion for helping individual women right here at home. On the one hand, she'd like to go to Germany to get her masters in international studies. On the other hand, she'd like to stay here in Sonoma County and help battered homeless women. Meet Danielle Wong, this month's 'Bilingual Community Treasure'.

Danielle Wong

Intern, Women's Justice Center

When Danielle first came from her hometown of Cupertino to visit the SSU campus she nervously looked out over the empty fields, and wondered what was wrong and where were all the buildings. But it didn't take long before she embraced the open spaces and natural beauty everywhere.

Danielle reached for open spaces in her studies, too. "I knew I wanted something broad", she says. Fearing that if she majored in something like political science she would only get the 'American view', Danielle set herself into the university's lesser known global studies program where she was free to stretch and explore.

And stretch she did. Taking courses on everything from earth science to international economics, Danielle began to hone in on an interest in how the process of globalization effects economic and social development. From there, she dove deeper to focus in particular on how globalization effects women. "I saw a little more than I would have," says Danielle, "If I had just stayed on one track."

Though the middle child of a Filipina mother and a Chinese father, Danielle says her childhood was everyday American. Her mother, in fact, as mothers did a generation ago, made a point of saying, "We're American now, and Americans only speak English". And being raised in Cupertino, with one of the largest Asian communities in the U.S., Danielle says she never felt out of place.

Ironically, it was in her High School, she says, that she first awakened to a broader world. For all four years, Danielle took active part in the California



Youth in Government Program, participating in mock Congress and the Constitutional debate team, and her fervor for world affairs was formed. She continued on with the U.N. team in college.

It was at SSU, also, that Danielle says she first experienced racism, claiming the school still isn't doing well in being a comfortable place for minority students. But as in all she does, Danielle worked to fix that, too, engaging actively in the university's MOSAIC program for promoting diversity.

Danielle was planning on taking the next step and studying abroad for her Master's degree. But working for Women's Justice Center and the Living Room, she's now torn. She's found a real passion for helping women here in Sonoma County. Besides, she says, she loves being able to look up and see the stars at night!





Why?

Why, with global warming, growing inequality, drought, war, and disappearing starfish, why does Women's Justice Center focus so single mindedly on ending the violent oppression against women?

The short answer is there's just no more effective way to impact all the rest. The liberation of women's energy will change all corners of the world!

This holiday season, please help support the struggle for freedom and justice for all women and girls.

Donate Today!

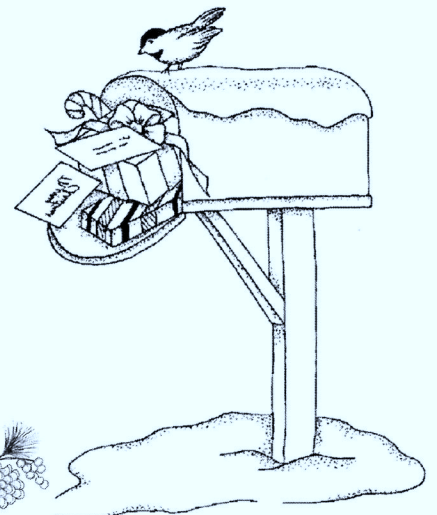
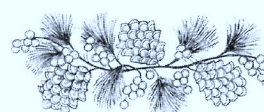
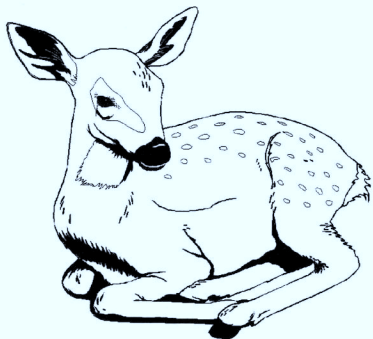
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Or, Donate online on our website:

At www.justicewomen.com

Click on the red "DONATE NOW" button
at the top left corner of the page.



Thanks to You..

It's been a while since we've passed on to you any of the 'thank you's' we receive from persons we've been able to help. Because it's your donations, and your donations alone, that enable us to provide these services, these thanks we receive belong as much to you. Most names have been redacted.



☺ ☺ ☺ To Whom It May Concern,

...I wanted to say thank you for a rescue from a sleepless night and the risk of letting someone guilty slip out of his consequences. Thank you :)

☺ ☺ ☺ Hello,

I want to thank woman's justice center for all the support I got when my daughter and I went through the police experience. Without you guys, I don't know what could've happened to me and my daughters without your support. Atentamente,

☺ ☺ ☺ Hola, (translated from Spanish),

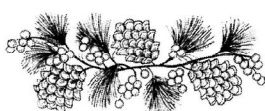
Thank you so much for sharing so much information.

A solidarity hug,

☺ ☺ ☺ Hello,

I would like to see if I can have the PDF of your Guide for Mothers, Grandmothers, and Others for Helping a Girl Caught in Prostitution or Sex Trafficking. In our work with families I think this will be helpful. Thanks,

Multi Agency Response Team
Commercially Sexually Exploited Children,
Los Angeles, CA.



☺ ☺ ☺ Good day,

The Canadian Forces has an annual week-long family violence campaign during which we highlight awareness and prevention education. This year our Wing Family Violence Awareness and Prevention Education Committee of helping professionals used two of your "12 Teaching Scenarios" to lead interactive educational briefings. The scenarios and discussions were assessed to be very helpful in meeting the learning goals.

...Thank you for your excellent resources.

Wing Social Worker
Canadian Forces Health Services
National Defence

☺ ☺ ☺ Hola, (translated from Spanish)

You gave me so much help. I'm very grateful. You took so much time to help me. You understood me. You helped me understand that I have rights, and that my daughter has rights, too.

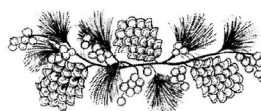
..☺ .and this just in today as we go to press....

☺ ☺ ☺ Thanks for your excellent piece on prostitution and Sweden. Great job. I wish we could get a few states to pilot it. I am speaking in Alaska next week at the Child Maltreatment Conference and will share your Blog. Alaska would be a perfect place to pursue it.

Blessings on you in your great work,

Casey

Casey Gwinn, Esq., President
National Family Justice Center Alliance
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San Diego, CA





The Sonoma County Sheriff's Department and other police departments in Sonoma County are in the process of developing policies for the use of police worn body cameras. As a preliminary policy, Sheriff Freitas has stated that deputies will be instructed to turn the cameras off when responding to domestic violence and sexual assault.

In October, the local ACLU asked our opinion on the subject. Because we feel this is such a critical current debate with far reaching consequences for the community, we share an overview of our initial thoughts here. The full text of our response is on our website at <http://www.justicewomen.com/policebodycameras.pdf>

We look forward to any feedback you may have and to providing additional input as we all work toward the best possible policy.

OVERVIEW: Police Use of Body Cameras in Cases of Violence Against Women and Children

Our RECOMMENDATION:

There Should Be Video, or at the Very Least, Audio Recordings Made in all Law Enforcement Victim Contacts in Cases of Violence Against Women and Children, Including in Contacts with Non-Uniformed as Well as with Uniformed Officers, and Including During All Phone Contacts.

Denying the accountability and protection of law enforcement recordings to women and children in gender based crimes, while providing that protection to the rest of the community, is a wholesale violation of women's constitutional rights to equal protection of the laws.

The Sheriff's argument that he is concerned for victim privacy is spurious and self-serving as law enforcement throughout Sonoma County has, for years, been regularly and routinely making a large array of video, audio, and photographic recordings of many of the most sensitive of victim contacts and statements, at the most sensitive of times, whenever it serves law enforcement interests.

For example, law enforcement throughout Sonoma County makes audio recordings of all victim 911 calls. They routinely make audio recordings of the in-depth rape victim interviews from start to finish. Audio recordings are always made of victim pretext calls. Fully identifiable still photographs are taken of victims' injuries in all states of victim dress and undress. And more, fully identifiable video recordings are routinely made of child sexual assault victim in-depth interviews on a nearly daily basis.

Some of these recordings are made after obtaining

formal consent, but many are made without any consent at all. If, on occasion, an individual victim does object to an officer's use of body camera, the officers should respond in the same way they plan to respond to other objecting victims, witnesses, or confidential informants

Throughout our 23 years of working with victims of these crimes in Sonoma County we have not had victims complain about law enforcement making any of these recordings, nor have we seen careless law enforcement release of these recordings. Strict protocols and identity hiding measures are already routinely used for each media type for preventing unwarranted releases, for preventing identifying of victims, and for protecting victim privacy.

Law enforcement should not be allowed to hide behind claims of concern for victim privacy in order to deny recording of victim contacts whenever law enforcement chooses, as it is precisely the unrecorded contacts with victims that are most rife with a damaging array of law enforcement misconduct in these cases. The nature of these misconducts aim primarily at dissuading victims, suppressing evidence, denying justice, and 'ditching' these cases, as is described and documented in more detail in the online text.

*** See pages 3 and 5 of the online text at www.justicewomen.com/policebodycameras.pdf



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This widespread and deeply hidden law enforcement misconduct in cases of violence against women and children, that occurs primarily when law enforcement is alone with victims, continues to occur throughout our county. These misconducts cause immense added risks to individual victims and to the public in general. They are the root cause of Sonoma County's dangerously low prosecution rates in these cases.

*** See page 5 of the online text.

Recording all contacts with victims is one of many urgently needed remedies.



Over the last two decades, California has passed a number of laws with the precise intent of attempting to stem the tide of these law enforcement misconducts in cases of violence against women and children. But because of frequent law enforcement non-compliance with these laws, along with the high level of invisibility of law enforcement/victim contacts in these cases, the laws haven't had the needed effect. (***) See pages 4 and 5 of the online text for summaries of these laws.)

Most importantly, given the plethora of law enforcement recordings already being made of victims' most sensitive moments, in all media forms, whenever it suits law enforcement, for law enforcement now to selectively, unnecessarily, and wholesale deny full recording coverage to victims of violence against women, while providing this level of protection and accountability to all other citizen contacts, constitutes a massive discriminatory denial of women's constitutional rights to equal protection of the law.

Historical factors also inform and heighten the imperative to record all law enforcement/victim contacts. For well over a century, up into recent decades, the excuse of the privacy of family matters was a primary excuse, if not the primary excuse, for law enforcement's overarching refusals to deal with violence against women and children. And further, law enforcement's historical discriminatory hostility to women and to these cases is also well documented

Two Eye-Opening Police Recruiting Videos See for Yourself! The Problems and Solutions Start Here!

**What is your town's police recruiting message?
Because you're likely to get what you ask for!**

For anyone working to promote police reform, on whichever aspect, from excessive force, to biased policing, to disregard for crimes against women, two YouTube police recruiting videos (see below) can help clarify the goals. In just minutes, the Antioch, CA recruiting video on the one hand, and the 2014 Peel Regional recruiting video on the other, deliver in stunning contrast two strikingly different policing philosophies. The videos also make clear that police recruitment itself can be a source of the problems or it can be a key and long overlooked arena for solutions.

To see the videos, in the YouTube search bar, enter,

1. "Antioch Police Department Recruiting Video"
2. "Recruiting Video 2014 thepeelpolice"

The Antioch recruiting video showcases an adrenaline-fueled, hyper-male, heavily weaponized, and completely non-verbal attack force, as it dominates a faceless community in one pitched battle after another. Sadly, you can find an abundance of these Antioch-style police recruiting videos. Here are just three more... Gainesville, FL., Illinois State Police, and Las Vegas Police. (It's worth noting that at no time in any of this set of videos are police officers shown communicating with their communities. It's all aggression, chase, and guns ablaze.)

Now look at the recruiting video from the Peel Regional Police (the 8 min 2014 video)! Above all, the video stresses a communication based police force, again and again emphasizing an insistence on diversity, trust-building, service, mutual respect, compassion, and protection capabilities across a highly diverse community by an equally diverse and highly trained force. Remember, you're likely to get what you ask for!

and continues on to this day.

Our police agencies shouldn't be allowed to carry these discriminatory attitudes and practices toward women and children into the 21st century.





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Anita turned to her friends, too, but so often their retorts were inexperienced or inappropriate. There was one friend, however, who lived in Auburn, who told Anita about a group of mothers there going through the same ordeals and who met together regularly. For the next three months, every week, Anita drove the grueling distance between Santa Rosa and Auburn to find the solace and support she'd been unable to find here at home.

She needed that support now more than ever. The day of Julia's interview with the detective finally arrived. Once there, the detective directed all discussion to Julia, and not once, to her as the mother.

Little happened after the interview except that Julia's behaviour grew worse. Police dragged their feet, failing to carry out the most basic investigatory steps. Julia would lash out at Anita, saying the perpetrator was right that no one would believe her.

Anita turned to her priest for help. The priest told her to pray and to forgive. Anita didn't say a word. The response was the final blow. Anita left the Catholic Church.

It's now near two years since the revelation of abuse had broken Anita's heart. She was finally able to get connected to resources she should have had from the first day. Things are good between Anita and her daughters now, too. There was no dramatic turning point. It's just that over time, Julia came to see through what so many of the professionals were obscuring. What Julia finally saw was that the one person who was there for her every day, fighting for her, untiringly reaching in to help, was her mother.



How to Help the Mother of a Molested Child

1. Listen Carefully and Often! Imagining what you would do if your child were molested quickly brings easy and impassioned answers to mind. But real situations are rife with complex and conflicting dilemmas. Listen carefully and often, and you'll begin to understand. Listen, and offer to listen some more. It's the kindest thing you can do.

2. Accompany the Mother to as Many Professional Contacts as Possible! Simply accompanying the mother as she seeks help from professionals is extremely powerful support. It brings out the best in the professional. It cuts the mother's isolation. It says, 'other people care about this person and we're watching how she is treated.'

3. Help Her Find More Help! When a child is molested, the intensity of crisis goes on for months. You can't do it all. Help the mother find more help; help with simple things, like babysitting, scheduling, transport of other kids, or someone to accompany her. They don't have to know everything. They just need to understand that whatever you give to the mother comes back to the child a hundred fold.

Happy Holidays!

