

Valerie Sinason, England

Valerie submitted, for the side presentation at the 48th session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations headquarters, New York, an article that shared her clinical, research, and activism work of campaigning for legal change. Which included launching, on March 21, 2002, in the House of Commons, two books edited by her, entitled "*Treating Survivors of Satanist Abuse*"(1994) and "*Attachment, Trauma and Multiplicity, Working with Dissociative Identity Disorder*"(1993), published by Routledge. The launching was accompanied by Briefing Points for MPs and the Press. Valerie has given consent for her information to be shared with others. Below is a condensed overview of her information.

INCIDENCE:

From 14 years of experience which began in 1990, with the supervision of the treatment of a learning disabled woman in Sweden who turned out to be a survivor of "ritual abuse", Valeria shares incidence figures. She mentions that insights into ritual abuse come from her various work experiences and is primarily taken from survivors in therapy or from therapeutic telephone calls, or from emails who talk about the offences that have been committed upon them or which they were forced to commit. Of over a sample of 200 persons it was found that "... survivors were tortured throughout childhood and adolescence and many continue to be tortured in adulthood." Extensive clinical work from various groups also informs that the majority of survivors encountered are from multi-generational abusing families, are multi-cultural and diverse coming from "Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, and Satanist families and communities". Overall, Valerie states she has had connection with around 250 women, 12 men, and 26 children who have alleged surviving ritual abuse and torture. From the numbers of people the victimized persons mention as taking part in such activities Valerie estimates the figure to be 4000. The pornography trade appears to be a primary source of income for some perpetrators.

NAMING THE CRIME AND THE NEED FOR LEGAL CHANGE:

Valerie's article provided examples of cases where convictions occurred however the perpetrators were charged with crimes such as the rape of a child, sexual abuse, and false imprisonment/grievous bodily harm/assisting sexual abuse, buggery, indecent assault, gross indecency but not ritual abuse and torture. The media made reference to lone perpetrators and to "incest orgies". Thus the true naming of the crime in the court did not happen and the reality of the heinous atrocities the perpetrators inflicted withheld.

FOCUSSING ON SOLUTIONS:

Valerie's Briefing Points gave ideals for solutions which were:

1. There is a need to recognize that coercion ought to be a defence for persons so victimized who are forced under duress to commit a range of crimes from early childhood onwards under fear of death. Crimes mentioned include mutilation and killing of animals, despoiling of graves and corpses, bestiality, necrophilia, acting in pornographic videos, rape, infanticide, induced abortions, cannibalism, and murder.
2. Witness Protection for persons so victimized who decide to tell.
3. Legislation needed to address ritual abuse of children and to aid vulnerable adults.
4. The requirement for a new multidisciplinary group to be set up to make recommendations on the nature and level of support needed to prevent this form of violence. The major issues the group should explore are:
 - a. Effective police operation across police jurisdictions
 - b. Resourcing commensurate with the scale of the crimes
 - c. Special training in multigenerational and dissociative issues

CLINICAL AND SUPPORT LINKS:

Valerie suggested the following:

1. **ACAL**, (the Association of Child Abuse Lawyers) is a non profit-making company set up for the benefit of lawyers and other professionals working with people who have been sexually, physically, and emotionally abused in childhood as well as people with learning disabilities. They are also experienced in work with ritual abuse survivors who are dissociative. Tel: 01923 286 888
2. **CDS**, (The Clinic for Dissociative Studies) offers assessments, training, individual and group psychoanalytic psychotherapy.
10 Harley Street, London W1G 9PF, Fax 0207 467 8312 Tel: 0207 467 8436
3. **CISTERS**, (Childhood Incest Survivors) PO Box 119, Eastleigh, Hants, SO50 9ZF, tel: 02380 369516 (answering machine only). Founded by Gillian Finch, this offers mutual support for adult females abused in childhood, offers workshops, newsletters, and meetings.
4. **LASA** (League Against Sadistic Abuse) formed in 1994 as a support group for parents whose children have been subjected to abuse of a bizarre, sadistic nature, often perpetrated by multiple abusers. This can have serious and tragic consequences. Non-abusing parents often have no-one to turn to and find mutual support invaluable. LASA operates a telephone helpline on 01364 644184 from 9 am-1pm (please leave a message initially). They are unable to support survivors themselves as their function is to support the carers of abused children.
5. **RAINS** (Ritual Abuse Information and Network Support) is for professionals and carers who support survivors. 01483 898600

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