

## Do you suffer in silence?

### A email letter.

*A letter from a survivor of sexual abuse sent to the Independent Panel for Review of Child Abuse in Mission Settings, The United Methodist Church. See also the panel's open letters sent September 29 and December 5, 2007.*

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Date: Wed, 10 Oct 2007

I was a victim of circumstances. My parents were missionaries in Brussels, Belgium since 1965. Europe was historical, and exciting. But most of all, our family was together and we were happy. After 2 years in Brussels, I remember my parents asking us children if we'd rather stay and live in Belgium or leave and go to Congo, Africa. It was a majority vote- "Africa"! My brother, sister and I wanted the adventures of Tarzan. Little did we know that the decision we made would change our lives so drastically, and the unthinkable would traumatize our family for many years. My parents worked in the interior of Congo. My brother and I were dropped off at the M.P.H. in Kinshasa. My sister, the youngest one was sent to an Elementary School in Lubondai. We were all separated for the first time. I loved the Congo. I made friends, and school had its ups and downs. It was good.

My world came crashing down after I was sexually molested by a dorm parent. He befriended me, took me on long trips over miles and miles of terrain to different villages. He was nice to me, and made me feel special. But that was soon to end. The first "bad touch" from him put a terrible fright in me. I was violated on several occasions, with no where to turn and no one to talk to. I hated myself, I hated what I saw in the mirror.

The horrible incidents of abuse, and a victim mentality stayed with me for years. Once fear set in, the silent anger came. I was slowly dying inside. My anger was silent because I internalized it. Outwardly, to others I performed well. I did what I had to do, but when I got home and was alone, I fell apart, mentally drained, and emotionally exhausted from crying uncontrollably. I was a pretender. This emotional down hill was destroying everything I loved. Broken relationships, family, friends, and loved ones gone, and I didn't know why? Years of mental anguish, with no relief. I couldn't fix "me". Doctors couldn't fix me. Being a workaholic didn't fix me. Time couldn't fix me. Depression and thoughts of suicide didn't fix me. I believed a lie. I believed I was a horrible person because of what he did to me.

I needed a better life. Someone said to me, "You are what you say". I had to change my old way of thinking about myself. I had to change my way of

speaking, thinking, and believing. I began to understand the power of words. That's when the process of healing began for me. It seemed simple, but I couldn't do it alone. I had too much baggage. I needed help from nightmares I didn't cause.

When I heard that the Presbyterian Church was doing an investigation on sexual abuse in the mission field, I was reluctant to come forward at first. I did eventually, (I wished sooner), and told my story and I received the help I so desperately needed. And it also reconnected me to my family I grew up with in the hostel in Kinshasa.

The Methodist Church is also doing their investigation and has selected individuals on the Panel who are available and willing to help anyone burdened with incidents of sexual abuse and molestation. I reached out for help and there were people who listened and made a way for me to turn my life around.

It can happen for you. Get rid of your fear and have faith. God will hear and answer your prayer. Don't suffer in silence any longer. Reach out for help. It's better to be happy and delivered from your past, than to suffer inside and pretend everything is all right. There is a better way.

The Bible says in Matthew 7:7-8, "Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks will receive, and anyone who seeks will find, and the door will be opened to him who knocks". God will make a way when circumstances say, "no way". We're here to help.

Thank you for taking to time to read my message of hope. May it bless you and give you the courage to choose life, and live abundantly.

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