

Sexual Victimization By a Member of Law Enforcement

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By: Jackie

From our earliest days we learn that police officers are here to protect and serve, that society has deemed them to be safe. But what happens when a member of law enforcement is the one who hurts you?

Afraid to report

One very powerful reason I chose not to report that I was raped by a police officer was because of the fear I had over reporting a cop to another cop. I never felt like I would be believed. I never felt like I would have a fair chance because I feared he would be protected by people just like him. I worried that my character would be attacked and that since he was a member of law enforcement, his would be unassailable. I couldn't envision a scenario where justice would prevail.

The Aftermath

Being raped by a police officer challenged every belief I ever had about right and wrong. It left me feeling alone against an unsafe world that I felt had turned on me. I found myself feeling the need to intentionally challenge authority in a misguided effort to regain control. One particular area of concern was my fear of ever being able to seek help from law enforcement if necessary. Would I ever overcome my fear in a time of need or would I allow this one person to further infringe upon my right to be safe? Would I ever be able to see a cop on the road and not think of my rapist?

Most people get nervous when they are driving and they see a cop behind them, but for me those feelings were accompanied by panic, anxiety and genuine fear. Since my rape, I have been pulled over a couple of times. Each time left me feeling emotionally paralyzed and on the verge of tears. I had a very difficult time differentiating between the experiences and the individuals.

I also found myself engaging in unhealthy behaviors when it came to relationships. I intentionally sought out relationships with men that were police officers. In a very misguided way I believed that I could somehow "replace" the memory of my rape with something consensual. Unfortunately having sex for the wrong reasons only served to deepen my pain.

Returning to Normalcy

It hasn't been easy, but it has been necessary to find a way to come to terms with being raped by someone in law enforcement. I am fortunate to be in an environment where I have seen police officers help children. I have also benefited from hearing stories about a friend's brother who is a police officer in the same large city as my rapist. Knowing that there are good people doing good things is something that has helped me change my tainted beliefs.

Some guiding principles that have assisted me in returning to my pre-rape beliefs are:

- *Separate the person from the position.*

A critical part of my healing was learning to separate my rapist from his profession. He was a rapist who happened to be a police officer. He wasn't acting in the realm of his official capacity. I needed to remind myself that for better or worse his profession didn't change the gravity of his actions.

- *The majority of people in these positions are good people.*

The tragedy of September 11th was a turning point in my healing because through the loss of that tragedy, many a law enforcement hero was found. This helped me stop generalizing and focusing on what the police meant to me. Instead, it helped me to see the positive.

In sharing my rape with other police officers I found them to be completely outraged that one of "their own" could ever commit such a heinous act. These men couldn't fathom how any man, never mind someone in charge of protecting, could ever harm another person.

Being raped by someone in a position of authority has certainly complicated my healing journey, but it hasn't prevented it.

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