

TELLING:

THE ETHICS AND HEALING FROM SPEAKING UP

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“[In] fiction we can hide behind characters... memoir asks you to remember as truthfully as you can what actually happened...”

-- Elizabeth Nunez in “The Art of Memoir” (The Center for Fiction, 2014, 14:45)

“My writing life has been a series of breakings and mendings, a shattering of the writing self that was, a repairing, through writing, of something in my life that warranted understanding and that needed fixing.”

-- Louise DeSalvo, *The House of Early Sorrows* (2018, p. xiii)

Woman, why are you crying?

Your tears should become your thoughts,

--Traditional song, rewritten by the Mahila Samakyha Project,
Andhra Pradesh, India (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 2)

CONFESSION: Noun.

1 a: an act of confessing

especially: a disclosure of one's sins in the sacrament of reconciliation

b: a session for the confessing of sins

2 a statement of what is confessed: such as

a: a written or oral acknowledgment of guilt by a party accused of an offense

(Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

BEFORE

“Whenever I begin work, I remind myself I am only writing an essay -- a trial, an attempt, a test, an exploration, an examination, an experiment, a way to learn something I didn't know before” (DeSalvo, 2018, p. xiv).

This exploration begins with an anecdote that lit a flame within that continues to burn for those who survive trauma and work to thrive in a broken world.

Two friends visit a tourist site and, as they are leaving, find themselves attacked -- shot and mugged in broad daylight. After medical care and one of them having to lie by their friend's dead body in the hospital, the one who survived begins to recover physically.

The police gather suspects and bring the survivor in to identify the perpetrators of the crimes: the murder of the friend, the attempted murder of the survivor, and the theft of her belongings.

The survivor surveys the roundup of individuals. Which one killed her friend?

Instant recognition.

Eye contact.

“Is it one of these?” the officer prompts.

The survivor shakes her head. “No, let them go. It's none of these,” she says in effect.

Some criminals, recognizing how close they came and the mercy they were given, might never hurt anyone again. But for many, more victims await. The criminal set free again to pursue more victims.

This scenario leaves me in shock, the contemplation of it during my evening walk accelerating from the absolute fury ignited inside by -- to me -- an injustice. The survivor in this scenario let a known murderer walk to freedom.

The survivor might even go so far as to comfort the victim's family sharing their grief at the loss of their son and brother, nephew and friend -- the family might even express how they felt blessed that she was alive and survived, that they were lucky to have her. This incident might even confirm her feelings, and she might survive this incident with her deep love for humanity after such a tragedy.

Did someone make such eye contact with my rapist in a lineup and "feel a deep love for humanity" and let him go, too, so he could one day -- not long after -- target and rape me?

How many individuals suffer recidivist crime because the perpetrator was never identified, even though the victim knew their identity, but chose not to say a word?

In the larger landscape of humanity, what does one owe to one's community, one's society, one's world? What does one owe to oneself as a survivor of such soul-shattering violence?

Is keeping it quiet to try to heal alone the right answer? Or is it beneficial to tell -- even if it is just a friend? As Louise DeSalvo (2018) writes in her own memoir, *The House of Early Sorrows*,

And though I try to understand people who cannot be understood, not to try to understand them would be far more futile than the futile act of trying. And to try to understand their lives is to begin to understand the lives of so many others like them."
(p. xvii)

I want to understand why or how a survivor can choose not to tell and how others of us do speak up; moreover, I also want to know that I have somehow done the *right* thing by telling of the trauma I endured, by sharing my recovery with others, by helping others -- directly or in-

directly -- endure and recover themselves. This examination is crucial in the healing process -- and all of us owe ourselves the best possible chance of healing and recovery, of life itself after suffering the identity-death of such an event.

The crime happened to me.

For years, growing up as a child in metropolitan areas all over the country, my dad shared stories of horrific crimes committed against young women in the hopes of educating me on what the real world was like. He must have been preparing me in some way to deal with harsh realities of being a female in a world that saw them as vulnerable victims. "Leave marks," he'd say. "Scratch and scream," he emphasized. "That way they can use the physical evidence." I was around thirteen when a girl my age disappeared in our St. Louis region. Then another girl was kidnapped from her bus stop. These terrible crimes provided more fodder for him. If I didn't survive, then the physical evidence could "tell" my story. As it happened, after I was raped, I showered, washed away most of the physical evidence, and chose to keep quiet -- initially.

The media interpretations I'd witnessed as a young woman seemed to always depict the victim on trial for her choices, her (alleged) sexual promiscuity, her habits, her naïvete. I'd heard family members talk about instances of female rape situations and what often followed beyond plot points was, "Well, what did she expect? You show up at a bar wearing that..." Indeed, Tannen (2008) sums it up in "There is no unmarked woman" with her line related to appearance and perception in our society: "If a woman's clothing is tight or revealing (in other words, sexy), it sends a message -- an intended one of wanting to be attractive, but also a possibly unintended one of availability" (p. 390). Always the victim stands doubly condemned for hers and for the criminal's actions: where she dons clothing, she also dons motive. The case against me in my own mind continued to build, and I stood convicted.

I don't want further humiliation, shame, embarrassment, and trauma.

This isolation on the part of the survivor makes perfect sense. One is not logical after trauma. Yet, with thought and consideration, we are

forced into serious contemplation of what has occurred. My body, shattered from the attacks, and my mind scattered and working to survive. My soul. My identity. All of it gone. It is no wonder victims circle the proverbial wagons and retreat into isolation. As David Brooks put it in his 2019 moral query and analysis into deeper and more meaningful living, *The Second Mountain*,

At the deepest center of each person, there is what we call, metaphorically, the heart and soul... we become what we love... The soul is the piece of us that gives each person infinite dignity and worth. Slavery is wrong because it obliterates the soul; rape is not just an assault on physical molecules, it obliterates another's soul. (14:42).

A shell remained. Nevertheless, a shell with questions and judgments and thoughts. Indeed, in his contemplations Levinas (1985/2017) approaches this inquiry by Nemo in much the same manner: “How does one begin thinking?” and Levinas replies, ‘It probably begins through traumatism or gropings to which one does not even know how to give a verbal form: a separation, a violent scene...these initial shocks become questions and problems, giving one to think’ (p. 21). How else can we be sent into the deepest parts of ourselves to retreat and consider the most difficult aspects of what it means to be human, to suffer, to be responsible for other human beings? I experienced the trauma. I took in what others implored. I gradually began to put myself back together:

Trauma robs the victim of a sense of power and control over her own life... She must be the author and arbiter of her own recovery.... No intervention that takes power away from the survivor can possibly foster her recovery, no matter how much it appears to be in her immediate best interest. (Herman, 1998, S145)

This story of self-condemnation and condemnation by family and society remains true for women in other parts of the world as well. Linor Abargil, Miss World from India, describes her experience and the culture in which she was brought up as well as the pressure on women:

For a rape victim, it's all about the first response. She [Abargil's mother] didn't ask me 'Why did you go with him?' or 'Why were you wearing this?' Most parents of rape victims do that and then that's it, the girl is never going to speak again about anything. (Sengupta, 2014, p. 1)

My parents reacted similarly, blaming me first for letting him in the door. I chose to keep quiet to all but the medical experts on campus and the counselor I saw a few days later. Abargil is right, though, in that speaking up is crucial to regaining agency and finding the best way forward for those who have suffered this type of trauma.

Why should I talk? Why should I put myself out there?

The initial violence of the attack left me in shock over the Saturday night/Sunday morning period. By Monday afternoon, I found myself seeking help from the medical office on campus. I confessed my own actions, feeling the guilt of having let a rapist into my home. The physician's assistant documenting my exam corrected me -- "*You did nothing wrong.*"

What felt like a confession became exoneration during the next few minutes of the embarrassing and painful physical examination.

By Friday, I told my story again -- still keeping it silent from my parents. The gentle male counselor listened carefully as I confessed again: "I let him in. It was late -- "

His response, like the physician's assistant, washed over me: "You were raped. *He* was the one in the wrong. He attacked you in your own home. You did nothing wrong -- you thought you were helping someone. You were doing a good thing for someone you thought was in trouble; you had no idea you were letting a violent criminal into your home. This *wasn't* your fault." In addition, the counselor -- a trained two-time black belt in various martial arts -- assured me there was little I could have done to prevent such an attack. I felt relief again when reading the story of another woman's training in the martial arts in lieu of carrying a gun in hopes of preventing such an assault:

My first positive step was to take a kung fu class, which teaches evasive or protective action when someone enters your space without permission. I learned to move confidently, scanning for possible

attackers. I learned how to assess danger...I also learned that one must practice several hours every day to be good at kung fu... when I practiced with him [husband], I learned how close you must be to your attacker to use martial arts...that unless she is very, very good at self-defense (she will be overcome). I have since read articles by several women who were extremely well trained in the martial arts, but were raped and beaten anyway” (Hasselstrom, 1991/2016, p. 344).

The problem being that few in our mainstream culture bother to understand these nuances. Even training in self-defense techniques -- ancient or modern -- the attack could not have been prevented and was not my fault. The demons continued to dwell, however, preventing me from taking ethical and responsible citizen action against my attacker.

Should I put myself in the position of being ridiculed and raked over the small-town coals of justice by admitting to letting a rapist into my home?

For many, that statement itself is logically flawed. I didn't know he was a rapist.

Should I tell? Should I have to put myself through that? Is it wrong if I keep silent? What would happen to my reputation? Was it selfish for me to even think that way?

According to my parents, yes, it was selfish -- so they pushed me to recognize the much larger picture of the events and the consequences.

“He’s done this before, Tracie! There’s no way you’re the first!”

“If he’s done it before, then no one else has pressed charges -- otherwise, he’d be in prison; he’d not have been able to do this to *you*.”

“You’ve got to speak up! He’s going to hurt someone else! *You’re* strong enough to do this.”

I remained stoic, unmoved in my resolve to shield myself from further abuse.

“Let’s meet at your favorite restaurant,” they announced the following morning. “We’ll treat you to lunch after your morning class.”

Reluctantly, I acquiesced.

I arrived to find they'd also invited the victim's advocate from the local police station to meet me. She, too, was horrified that they did this as an ambush rather than an agreed-upon meeting.

The ethics of secrets. It's funny how amenable chips and salsa can be when discussing the details of how to survive a cross-examination in a court of law judging *your* personal choices, lapses in judgment, clothing at the time of the assault, and on and on. I refused.

It took another week before I felt it necessary to provide my statement to police.

As I approached the police officer at the front window, regret and anxiety and shame consumed me. When I told him I wished to report a crime, he asked what crime, I said rape, and he turned away rolling his eyes and calling for a detective. The trust that I needed to rely on in order to make it through these moments evaporated. I needed to trust the system; I needed to trust someone there to believe me and believe in me to make this right in some way. Martha Nussbaum, professor of law and ethics at the University of Chicago, stated it clearly in an interview with Bill Moyers on his program, "A World of Ideas" (2011):

To be a good human being is to have a kind of openness to the world, an ability to trust certain things beyond your own control that can lead you to be shattered in very extreme circumstances, in circumstances for which you are not yourself to blame. . . . And I think that says something very important about the condition of the ethical life. That it is based on a trust in the uncertain, a willingness to be exposed. It's based on being more like a plant than like a jewel, something rather fragile, but whose very particular beauty is inseparable from that fragility. (18:56).

The detective waited. The victim's advocate sat beside me. Stereotypically, the loud clock hung on the wall, ticking. The detective leaned close to me, kneeling to meet me at eye-level. "Tracie, my job is to catch the bad guys. I want to help you. Bettie wants to help you. We've got to get this guy for what he did to you; we've got to have your help to stop him -- to keep him from doing it again to someone else."

I exposed the events of that night that led to the shattering of myself both verbally and on paper, recalled every single detail of that four-hour attack. The victim's advocate, Bettie, remained by my side the entire time. She became the "system" holding the fragile survivor, helping me to believe that those factors beyond my control would work to bring justice.

I wrote every detail I could recall -- and there were a lot of them -- and eleven pages later my statement felt like a full confession in front of a panel of judges. I had done wrong; I had paid for my sins. It was time to condemn the actual criminal, the rapist responsible for manipulating me and then attacking me in my own home.

WISDOM OF TELLING: ANCIENT TO MODERN

In studying the wisdom of philosophers over the centuries, many recognize duty to oneself and duty to one's state or community. According to ancient wisdom regarding the ethics of living, one owes a duty to oneself and to the "state" to speak up when one is wronged by another within the society. The work of reconciliation deals with both: individual and humanity.

One can come to Aristotle's (350 B.C.E./2009) point in the *Nicomachean Ethics* related to human beings and their responsibilities to one another only after such consideration. The answer I came to agrees with Aristotle (350 B.C.E./2009):

Now the worst man is he who exercises his wickedness both towards himself and towards his friends, and the best man is not he who exercises his virtue towards himself but he who exercises it towards another; for this is a difficult task. (p. 82)

Clearly attacked, I held within a choice that I alone must make -- arguably, the more "difficult task" lay with me. Aristotle goes further in his views on justice when he considers the system itself and the way in which relationships are made right. "Therefore the just is intermediate between a sort of gain and a sort of loss...an equal amount before and after the transaction" (Aristotle, 350 B.C.E./2009, p. 88). Even with going forward, a possible trial, some version of a sentence -- this is no simple "transaction," for there is not an "equal amount" when one's identity is destroyed by violence. But no justice is different than a

voided “transaction” in which justice was never pursued to begin with. Plato echoes the idea of good and bad of moral and immoral: “He should only consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong and acting the part of a good man or of a bad” (Plato, 1998, p. 44). What does the “good man” do? How could I allow someone who had done wrong to go about -- most likely -- continuing to do wrong against my fellow human beings?

Other ancients in more distant parts of the geographical world also saw the significance of morals, virtues, and ethics related to speaking up when the sacred was injured -- the importance of the principles of the laws that kept communities together. Confucius offers this piece in his *Analects*: “The superior man takes pains in moral culture...The superior man cares about the sanctions of law...When you have met a virtuous man, try to follow his example; when you have met an immoral man, try to examine yourself inwardly” (Confucius, 1998/1992, p. 32). A rapist proves to be a non-virtuous man subject to the law. Upon examining myself and my own actions, the rapist proved to be violent and a danger to a law-abiding citizenry.

In a similar vein, the *Way* of the Buddhists states:

Right Action aims at promoting moral, honourable and peaceful conduct. It admonishes us that we should abstain from destroying life, from stealing, from dishonest dealings, from illegitimate sexual intercourse, and that we should also help others to lead a peaceful and honourable life in the right way. (Rahula, 1998, p. 25)

Rape is certainly illegitimate -- i.e., violent -- intercourse in which the sexual organs become weapons of power and control. Again, this is dishonoring to citizens and their way of life in peace and living in the right way. Without a victim speaking up, a rapist remains free to attack again.

Centuries later, John Stuart Mill (1998) offered this take on our concern with others as individuals and as citizens in community with one another as the collective humanity:

It is one of selfish indifference, which pretends that human beings have no business with each other’s conduct in life, and that

they should not concern themselves about the well-doing or well-being of one another... Human beings owe to each other help to distinguish the better from the worse, and encouragement to choose the former and avoid the latter. (p. 131)

Clearly, in this line of reasoning and ethical understanding, we have a responsibility to each other -- not only to hold one another accountable, but also to protect each other from those within our sphere who may be dangerous and “distinguish the better from the worse.”

More recently, in his podcast, “Philosophize This!”, Stephen West (2017) detailed philosopher Simone De Beauvoir’s ethics of being a citizen and one’s responsibilities as a human being within an organized community. At one extreme: “You are a citizen... you have a duty to uphold to the state” (West, 2017, 1:55). However, being a human being means dealing with the ambiguities. We’re responsible for one another and ourselves and morality is gray, not black and white. While we cannot know what will happen as far as consequences, we must -- in the crucial moment -- be prepared to make the best possible decision and do the right thing for self and society (West, 2017). The conflict of whether to expose oneself and one’s trauma by going forward is -- to some -- a nuanced and complex moral argument. We must consider and weigh the consequences.

Perhaps Gary Kessler (1998) puts it best in his *Voices of Wisdom*, when he says, “In a world of dramatically unequal power ... doing nothing to get in the way is no better than putting up with; it is simply not good enough” (p. 16). Never would I want to use tolerance of a violent act as a way to potentially injure others. There would be no “putting up with,” but rather action to help protect others in the only way left to me: speaking up.

PUBLIC CONFESSION

A few days after his arrest, while being questioned by the detective, the perpetrator confessed to raping me.

After his confession -- the only truth he gave throughout the process -- suddenly, his words somehow confirmed my own ethos, and I became substantiated with his four pages of the events of that night. My 11 pages detailing my soul’s death meant nothing in the eyes of

most of the law enforcement aware of the case -- until they heard his. Indeed, Foucault's (1977/1995) analysis rings true here regarding the criminal's confession: "Long-held beliefs about confessions detail how the confession, especially the written one, condemns the perpetrator more so than any other evidence...the confession had priority over any other kind of evidence" (p. 38). The fact that *his* statement matched mine suddenly gave mine credibility. How off-target we may be in this world when the victim/survivor proclaiming the truth remains held in skepticism while the perpetrator-turned-confessed-criminal -- again, as Foucault (1975/1995) illustrates perfectly -- "came to play the role of living truth" (p. 38). Should not the survivor speaking up *play* the most important part, that of truth? As Crump (2019) iterates in the article,

Why do we admit criminal confessions into evidence? ...They [the confession] can be compared to otherwise known facts about the alleged crime that are not publicly available and that would not be accessible to anyone but the perpetrator, and this factor enhances their reliability. (p. 74).

Reliability. Credibility. Criminal confession -- paradoxical that a *criminal confession* lends credibility to a survivor's statement. Perhaps the survivor does play the most important part: the bearer of capital-T, Truth.

My rapist tried to recant the confession.

He failed.

AFTERMATH

The consequences of speaking up continue to reverberate, but the immediate and insistent voices around the world are being heard now in the post-#metoo movement. In India, women -- long treated as less-than -- fight now for equality and for rights related to charging those responsible for the crimes committed, especially when it comes to sexual assault and abuse. The reasoning follows the responsibilities the survivor has to her community as articulated here by Abargil, the survivor:

I want all Indian rape survivors to speak up, talk about their cases, so that people like us can document cases and lobby with govern-

ments. Abargil was violated by a man who had raped twice before but not faced any investigation (Sengupta, 2014, p. 1).

Retired sex therapist (and now erotica writer), Dr. Donna Jennings (2021) encourages individuals to become strong enough to talk about their traumas.

For those who are able to articulate concerns they have and believe them to be related to sexual assault, I see a strong mind-body connection, a mental process that allows them to tap into their resilience and ego strength for resolve, a way to use their emotions to provide information for growth in the situation. (personal communication, June 24, 2021).

In a follow-up to the question, Jennings (2021) reiterated that if the individual appears not-quite-ready to talk, she wants to do everything she can to “bolster” that individual to get them to the point to which they can speak up for themselves. Silence can be deadly for multiple reasons. As Amanda Palmer related, when one is unable to seek help, the silence enables the demons to lift weights in the cellar of their soul (Ferriss, 2019); the silence eats them alive as the trauma remains, and the shrapnel of the attack festers. Ian McEwan’s (2020) eerie novel, *Machines Like Me*, paints this picture all too well when the female protagonist’s closest friend endures being raped -- then pleads with the protagonist to remain silent. “She had slit her wrists... Mariam was dead because I’d kept her secret and denied her the help she needed...I’d killed her daughter with my silence...” (McEwan, 2020, p. 172). A court’s silence, a community’s silence, a victim’s silence... the gas that hovers over the trench of warfare eventually sinks downward to become a cloud of death -- silent and fatal.

Other help lines and sites exist. The Rape Crisis Center (TRCC) in their page entitled “After an Assault” advises those survivors to seek “Healing and Counseling.” TRCC (2021) urges victims:

Getting support from professionals and from people who have had similar experiences are two common ways that victims/survivors heal after a sexual assault. The Rape Crisis Center offers *free* individual counseling for survivors (ages 12 and up) and

their support networks. We also facilitate or help facilitate a variety of free support groups. (p. 1).

These online spaces offer unique venues for survivors sharing their stories -- often to other survivors supporting them, instead of condemning.

What is significant about these online spaces is that the power relations between the speaker and the hearer (respondent or witness) can be broken down. Unlike the confession described by Foucault as witnessed by the priest, the judge in a court of law, or a psychiatrist, in the online space the witnesses are more likely than not to be survivors. (Loney-Howes, 2018, p. 43).

Research indicates those women who choose to speak up, even to only those closest to them, recover and are mentally and physically healthier. "Reaching out to a professional sooner may lessen the psychological and physical toll" (Arnold, 2016, para 24), and these studies show that the timeline does not necessarily matter -- just that one does reach out: "Psychological therapies for rape and PTSD are effective whether you seek help right after a trauma or years down the line" (Arnold, 2016, para 25). The American Psychological Association (APA) goes further in their analysis with data pertaining to survivors sharing their stories via the written word. In the article "Open up!", the APA (2003) found that

Six weeks after the writing sessions, students in the trauma group reported more positive moods and fewer illnesses than those writing about everyday experiences. Furthermore, improved measures of cellular immune-system function and fewer visits to the student health center for those writing about painful experiences suggested that confronting traumatic experiences was physically beneficial. (para 1).

Now, technology makes it possible for survivors to share their stories in previously unavailable ways, through empathic social media outlets with anonymity or with identification. One such site is SAYFTY: Empowering Women Against Violence. Their page and online venues allow survivors to write their own stories and share them -- the page features a mosaic of photos and stories from identifiable and anony-

mous writers working to heal through sharing and receiving positive feedback from others. These small “communities” are growing online, empowering those suffering with agency to *author* their lives.

Even now, nearly 24 years after I was assaulted, I find myself defending my actions or standing up for others due to continuous victim-blaming. I continue to stand by my (and my professional counselor’s) assessment: being naïve or unprepared or “in the wrong place at the wrong time” *is not the crime*. If I never spoke up, no one could condemn me; however, I believe I would still be condemning myself -- that’s the power of release. That’s the power of agency and ownership of my healing and, ultimately, the forgiveness I can offer. Forgiveness is not the same as excusing the behavior. I do not understand the person — the citizen — who does not speak up; I do not believe that she acted appropriately -- but I was not there. Whether the man in the anecdote killed again or not, I do not know. I do know that if he did, then it would be very difficult not to feel the she who did not tell was responsible in some way by *not* speaking up. Love for humanity, after all, includes those innocents who might be harmed in the future by the individual victims who chose to remain silent.

I have no idea if he has sexually assaulted or raped others since his release. Did I do the right thing? A question I do not ask myself. Is it better to have him registering (if he follows legal protocol) as a sexual offender than to allow him to be a clandestine convicted criminal easily slipping from one community to another with no trace or hint of his violent history? Is it better for him to have “paid his dues” to society by serving his time in prison and being allowed a “clean slate” from which to conduct his life afterward? There is no clean slate for the victim/survivor. There is no clean slate for the perpetrator, now known as a sex offender. The “transaction” is as close to equal as can be, it seems.

The definition of punishment relies on a sin or crime being committed and the requisite consequences determined for it. Is the punishment knowing that I went through with charges, that I stood before a judge and read my statement, or that he went away to a state facility for roughly 19 months? We both live with the events for the rest of our lives.

If placing one's reputation and health on the line for others, if facing trauma and discomfort in the heat of a law enforcement and court-based spotlight is doing a good deed in the hopes that someone else is not victimized -- then, yes, I believe I did the right thing. I return to Levinas (1985/2017) and the truth of our experience here as individual human beings. "In reality, the fact of being is what is most private; existence is the sole thing I cannot communicate; I can tell about it, but I cannot share my existence" (Levinas, 1985/2017, p. 57). While we may be unable to fully *share* our time and space together as human beings, we can certainly reach out to one another, share our stories through communication and continue attempting to understand and heal.

In National Public Radio's *Morning Edition*, Yuki Noguchi (2019) reported on the progress -- or lack thereof -- of those who spoke out during the #metoo movement. One survivor, Dina Lee Almeida, recounted her story and the emotional catharsis she achieved by speaking out, despite little to show for it in terms of justice.

'From a spiritual standpoint, I believe in miracles. I've already won,' to which Noguchi replied: 'There's a common refrain among people who've told me their #MeToo stories. On one hand, there's relief and solidarity in talking openly. On the other, speaking out often takes a great personal toll - emotional and financial. (Noguchi, 2019, p. 1).

This fits with my own feelings and my own victim-impact statement given during the sentencing of the man who raped me -- a refrain of "I'm glad I spoke up because it shows that you did not win in this act of violence that affected me in unimaginable ways, but also changed my family and friends and community." A similar statement from a survivor in Ireland during her rapist's sentencing echoes for survivors around the world who embraced courage and spoke up: "...despite standing here with my heart on my sleeve and admitting the effect you have had on me, let me be clear, you did not win" (Let me be clear, 2018, para 54). The victory is not hollow; the fruits from this terrible season come forth in sometimes unexpected ways.

I cannot be certain if my actions changed anything that occurred in his future. Sex offender registration is required -- can that prevent tragedy? Maybe. A permanent prison record on file for him -- can that affect his social interactions and prevent opportunities for further criminal behavior? Maybe. Or, as my worst self imagines at times, the man is bound for Hell in the Joyce (1916/2016) version of it:

...a strait and dark and foul smelling prison, an abode of demons and lost souls, filled with fire and smoke...by reason of the great number of the damned, the prisoners are heaped together in their awful prison...for ever with unspeakable fury. (p. 200)

Is that what I really want? Again, my worst self's imaginings. Or wouldn't I still be there given that this is where "lost souls" abide?

What have I done to reconcile? Counseling. Forgiveness. Though forgiveness is a process not an end or outcome. It is continual renewal so that I do not find myself in the Hell described above. The best life is one of contemplation, one of proactive endeavors to help others and myself. What have I done then to perpetuate and create that life? Serving others through my teaching and writing. "Writing, art, music, I think, aren't just fun. They're essential. They're bone, flesh, blood, sinew, soul, spirit" (DeSalvo, 2018, p. 27). My writing, my testimony -- the very necessity DeSalvo illustrates here as the flesh -- becomes love. Hopefully, I am reaching others through my example of love for one another -- my son, my students, each person I encounter on the journey.

Philosopher Martha Nussbaum addresses the emotion of anger after awful events in an interview for *The New Yorker* in regard to the #MeToo movement. She clarifies the usefulness of such emotion, of such action related to improving life for all:

But there is a kind of anger which I call transition anger, because it turns and faces the future. That is very useful, namely saying, 'That's absolutely outrageous. It must not happen again.' ... Namely, you lop off the desire for retribution and you then combine the outrage with a move forward that involves hope and faith and even love for people (Chotiner, 2021, para 21).

The improvement of life for all should be the noble purpose. In *The Road to Character*, David Brooks (2015) makes the case that individuals who have suffered -- people like Viktor Frankl, for example -- choose paths that develop and serve their personal character but also their communities (and in Frankl's case, the world at large). He includes in his chapter on "The Big Me" the Humility Code. In one of the tenets, he states that individuals who have what we call "character" demonstrate traits such as "courage, honesty, humility" and they do it over the long term of life, not just in a moment. He goes further: "In the realm of the intellect, they have a set of permanent convictions about fundamental truths" (Brooks, 2015, p. 264). I can only imagine that, while the silent survivor and I both hold forgiveness as a fundamental truth, I see the act of speaking out in my life to be of greater importance than what she may. But, as with other truths I hold dear, I *choose* to see her as a person who experienced an act of violence different from my own; neither of us "deserved" what happened, nor did we endure it without the help of others. While I do not understand her reasoning completely and disagree with it, I still choose to see the acts of good she has done in the world to try to help others heal from similar acts we experienced: trauma, truth-telling to ourselves and others, and the art of transcending to greater good. I pray we have both done and will continue to do this throughout our time here. As DeSalvo (2018) says in her memoir,

Woolf taught us that writers are human beings, that writing is a human act, that the act of writing is filled with consequences for a society and for its readers. No 'art for art's sake.' Instead, 'art for the sake of life.' (2018, p. 160)

While silent survivors and those who tell handle our own traumas differently, we both seek to expand the love for our fellow human beings and love others through our daily works. The love for fellow human beings kept her from coming forward and naming the perpetrator; the love of that same human community motivated me to emerge from the silence of my trauma and stand up to speak up. As Plato recounts from Socrates, "I would rather die having spoken after my manner than speak in your manner and live" (Plato, p. 49). I spoke my truth, and

I must live with it and am happy to do so. Ultimately, humanity wins because we have both -- as survivors -- triumphed.

There is a description that lingers from DeSalvo's (2018) memoir:

And my grandmother would make the sign of the cross over the bread and kiss her fingertips and bend over the bread that she had made, weeping...because to her the bread was sacred and to her the only way to cut the bread was to pull the knife through the bread toward your heart. (p. 21)

That which is sacred is severed, the ritual of life repeated over and over. Yet, we rise again in grace.

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