

Extreme Abuse Survey

**Wanda Karriker:
We're Off To Tell the World**

Copyrights are held by the survey team: Thorsten Becker
Wanda Karriker
Bettina Overkamp
Carol Rutz

Provided by S.P.ORG.-Consulting e.V. • Lueneburg, Germany

We're Off To Tell The World¹

Wanda Karriker, PhD

I was three years old, a chubby child in pigtails, when CBS news commentator Edward R. Murrow walked into the Buchenwald Concentration Camp and broadcast to the world: “I know that few of you are going to believe this report, for what I am about to tell you defies common sense and goes beyond human experience; yet it is true, for I have seen it with my own eyes” (as cited in Marmer, 1997).

I was forty years old, a newly licensed psychologist, when clients began marching into my office and in that sacred space called psychotherapy began telling me of their personal holocausts as victims of ritual abuse and mind control.

1988. I attend a conference in Chicago that is focused on dissociative disorders. First time I'd ever talked with any unskeptical colleagues about my work with ritually-abused clients. In an *ad hoc* group, therapists from across North America sit around in a circle. They talk about similar stories of ritual abuse that they have heard from clients. The leader calls for calm. He cautions that we as therapists should not make this phenomenon public until we have research to back it up. I sit on the edge of my chair and blurt out, “Are we gonna do just like our clients are told to do and keep our mouths shut?”

For most people, it would be easy to disbelieve a child who talks about ritual abuse. Not so for my German colleague Thorsten Becker. He once worked with a child who told him a bizarre story about the devil showing up at some sort of ceremony in a cemetery and performing all sorts of abusive rituals on her. When she later explained: “I know it was not really the devil because he had a zipper on the back of his suit,” Thorsten realized that the child had been telling the truth.

Tate (as cited in van der Hart, Boon, and Jansen, 1997) found similarities among child cases of ritual abuse reported in Britain, North America, and the Netherlands. He concluded that “either there exists a worldwide conspiracy by toddlers or the children

¹ Presented on March 1, 2007 as part of the panel, “*When I Was a Girl*” [Dana Raphael, Chair] at the 51st Session of the Committee on the Status of Women Feb. 26–March 9, 2007 at the United Nations.

are speaking truth” (p. 140).

In reaction to persons who argue that most or all claims of ritual abuse and mind control programming are fabricated, criminal justice Professor Hal Pepinsky (2005) counters:

If these narratives are essentially fabricated, they must have been fabricated in many different ways at once. It would require a more elaborate “conspiracy” to account for how similar narratives could be falsely implanted in so many survivors’ minds in so many different ways (e.g., “memories” that arise before therapy in some cases and after therapy in others, in childhood in some cases and only long afterward in adulthood in others) than to account for how so many cults and mind control programmers could operate essentially in secret, with impunity. (p. 1371)

Who in the world wants to acknowledge that horrific acts of inhumanity such as those reported by survivors on this panel have any basis in truth?

But imagine, if you will, that you are a therapist. Sitting across the room is a woman seven years older than you who is acting like a seven-year-old frightened child. Suddenly, her demeanor changes to her adult self. She points to a scar on her shin shaped like a cross. She tells you about a serial rape in a funeral home. The railroad track that cuts the town in half. A feed mill with four tall silos.

In your mind, you picture the small town in the Bible Belt where you grew up in. The funeral home that some of your relatives owned. A railroad track that cuts the town in half. The feed mill with four tall silos. It’s gone now. Burned to the ground when you were in the third grade.

Your client’s town could be any town USA in the early forties.

The funeral home? Perhaps your relatives had rented it out to be used as a temple of evil.

A year later your client tells you the names of some of her abusers. Names you

remember from your own childhood. Your relatives. Friends of your family. Pillars of the community. People who were supposed to love and protect you.

What do you do with this information?

For me, as a therapist, I had no choice. If I wanted to help other people overcome the aftereffects of violence conducted in the name of some ideology –some “ism”– if I ever hoped for peace again in my own soul, I’d have to go where I didn’t want to go –even as my clients so often found they had to– into the past . . . deeper and farther than I myself had ever plunged.

During six years of psychotherapy, searching for memories I never wanted to find, I came to KNOW that when I was a girl in that little town in the Bible Belt, I, too, was exposed to ritual abuse and attempted mind control.

Enough about me. Remember that meeting in 1988 when the skeptical moderator called for research? Well, two decades later, I had found only one study in which researchers actually “listened” to what a group of ritual abuse survivors -19 women and one man- disclosed about their abuse histories (Shaffer & Cozolino, 1992).

And none involving mind control survivors.

About a year ago, I teamed up with Carol Rutz (a healed ritual abuse / mind control survivor from the US), Thorsten Becker (a social worker) and Bettina Overkamp (a psychologist) from Germany to develop an instrument to explore commonalities reported by adult survivors of ritual abuse and / or mind control. On January 1, 2007, our “International Survey for Adult Survivors of Extreme Abuse” (in both English and German) went online at <http://extreme-abuse-survey.net>.

The following words from the UK mirror comments we have received from numerous survivors. “Heartfelt thanks for all your efforts. I believe that the 21st century will bring truth to the world because of all of us, survivors and supporters, who will lead the way. We have not survived in vain.”

Reaction to our survey from therapists has been mixed. Although many expressed appreciation for our efforts, some expressed concern that the survey questions were

suggestive and could destabilize survivors. In a private discussion of this matter, Sheri Oz, a therapist from Israel, said: “It seems to me that all this concern about “saving” adult survivors of evil from a questionnaire that can validate their sanity is inappropriate.”

Kathy Downing, a therapist from California, said that when she had tried to dissuade a client from taking the survey because some therapists thought the questions might be upsetting, her client responded: “A survey? They’re worried about a friggin’ survey? After what we’ve been through?” So Kathy wonders, “Exactly what is it about the survey that could destabilize the survivor? The questions themselves provoking overwhelming flashbacks? Or the threats that the perps have instilled in their victims: not only ‘If you tell you die,’ but also ‘If you ever remember these things you will have to kill yourself.’”

My colleague, Carol Rutz, replied to Kathy: “When I was new in therapy, the “don’t tell” programming and fear associated with telling was overwhelming. I too felt all of the things your clients have indicated. It’s good to be reminded how vulnerable and fearful survivors can be. Once they tell and find none of those horrid things happen, then it will be easier to tell and tell and tell. I would say this survey may provide a key element in their ability to move forward in their healing.”

As of February 7 with 7 weeks left in the survey period, approximately 900 survivors of extreme abuse from 24 countries had punched their stories onto the World Wide Web. We have received responses from 6 continents. All but Antarctica. Apparently penguins aren’t into ritual abuse. Or as my husband said, “Maybe they don’t have email.”

In closing, I’d like to share the words of a survivor who has never published this anywhere.

Tortured by the silence and self-hatred and trying to find some redeeming value in your own life after having your life threatened every moment creates an indefinable terror. Being buried alive with bugs or dead animals and later being rescued by the same torturer who is now your savior. Being brainwashed that you are one of them because you have had to kill an animal to save

yourself or a sibling. Wrapped in paper and buried alive to later be thrown in a pond so that you can demonstrate how much you want to live. And, being raped and then forced to deliver and bury your own child when you are but a child is impossible to process. Repeated medical tests and intrusive treatments that the professionals can document but not explain contribute to a complete and utter hopelessness. Who do you trust and what is real? Then, someone writes about and asks about those same experiences that haunt your life. All those ghosts that have terrorized your life and prevented a connection with another human being are suddenly documented in a survey. To learn that there are others with the same existence is bittersweet. It's something that you've never wished on anyone else, but are relieved to learn that the insanity is not just in your mind. Unfortunately, the greater the numbers of strangers who have lived this tortured existence, the more validity there is that this atrocity occurs. This, the world needs to know!

I know that ritual abuse and traumatic mind control are real –to borrow the powerful words of Edward R. Murrow during his broadcast from Buchenwald– “for I have seen it with my own eyes.”

Thank you Dr. Raphael for giving me this opportunity to speak about courageous survivors around the world who, by responding to the Extreme Abuse Survey and by speaking and writing about their survivorship, have overridden the “don't remember and don't tell programming” and have told secrets that the world was never supposed to hear.

I invite survivors and their advocates to join with me in proclaiming . . .

WE'RE OFF TO TELL THE WORLD!

References

Marmer, S. S. (1997).

A credulous skeptic's approach to cults and multiple personality disorder.

In G. A. Fraser (Ed.), *The dilemma of ritual abuse: Cautions and guides for therapists* (pp. 137–163).

Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press.

Pepinsky, H. (2005).

Sharing and responding to memories.

American Behavioral Scientist, 48 (10), 1360–1374.

Shaffer, R. E., & Cozolino, L.J. (1992).

Adults who report childhood ritualistic abuse.

Journal of Psychology & Theology, 20 (3), 188–193.

van der Hart, O., Boon, S., & Heijtmajer J, O. (1997).

Ritual abuse in European countries: A clinician's perspective.

In G. A. Fraser (Ed.), *The dilemma of ritual abuse: Cautions and guides for therapists* (pp. 137–163).

Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press.