

**BREAKING THE SILENCE**

# QUEBRANDO O SILÊNCIO

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## **TEENAGE PREGNANCY**

The majority of early pregnancies between 10 and 14 years of age are due to acts of violence, p. 8

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# Sex Tourism

This crime takes advantage of poverty to transform minors into merchandise for pleasure. Learn how it operates and report this crime that takes place near you, p. 2

# DANGEROUS DESTINY

*For impoverished girls and women, sex tourism is the illusive path to a Cinderella dream life. In reality, it is a crime that is punishable by ten years of imprisonment for the exploiter and leaves permanent marks on those who are exploited*

Photo: William de Moraes



Being the host for two major sporting events within a short two-year period, the world has its eyes on Brazil as never before. Because of these events, the country has become the go-to destination for soccer fans and those who love sports in general. Tragically, thousands of tourists do not arrive in tropical lands just because of their interest in Brazilian monuments, history, natural beauty or a nation's talent with a soccer ball. Many come looking for something else – sex tourism. This article aims to warn tourists about this underground network and wants to encourage you to report this crime so that this illegal system may be weakened.

Within the past years, the drama of illegal sex commerce has left the restricted space of discussion forums and police intelligence to gain a voice in the media and governmental campaigns. As a notable example, human trafficking for sexual purposes was the plot of a prime-time drama series on the largest Brazilian TV network in 2012.

**Visibility** – Interest concerning this problem, in fact, is also the result of broader studies that better profile the complexity of this topic. One survey that helped to open the eyes of politicians and society in general was the *Study on Trafficking in Women, Children and Adolescents for Commercial Sexual Exploitation* – Pestraf, June 2002.

Among other data, the study indicated that Brazil had 241 routes of exploitation, which consisted of 131 international routes, 78 interstate routes and 32 inter-municipal routes. The main destination abroad receiving women and adolescents was Spain, followed by Holland, Venezuela, Italy and Portugal.

The survey also sketched the profile of the women recruited. Usually they are

of African-Brazilian descent, from poor communities, have lower educational levels, live on the outskirts of large metropolitan areas or in poor rural towns. Many of these minors, between 7 and 14 years of age, have already suffered some type of violence within or outside of their own family. Teens tend to be exploited in the Brazilian “market”, where as the adults end up going abroad.

If the business of sex exportation is shameful, the portrait of child prostitution within the borders of Brazil is no less shocking. A survey carried out by the Federal University of Brasilia and the National Secretariat of Human Rights revealed that between 2005 and 2010, the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents took place in 53% of the 5,561 Brazilian municipalities.<sup>1</sup>

**Route of pleasure** – But the warning does not stop here. Data from the Brazilian Tourism Ministry from 2004 indicates that of the 1,514 Brazilian tourist destinations<sup>2</sup>, 26% have networks for commercial sexual exploitation of minors. These numbers place Brazil and Latin America, ahead of Southeast Asia, as the main itinerary chosen by tourists who pay to fulfill the fantasy of intimate relations with supposedly exotic natives, who are more sexually available.

An issue to consider is that beyond all the moral and social degradation associated with any type of prostitution, sex tourism represents a strong bond with organized crime, human trafficking and the exploitation of children and adolescents.

This industry takes advantage of large pockets of poverty in Brazil and the historically distorted view that Brazilians, as a people previously exploited by colonizers, are inferior to Europeans. Unfortunately, this exploitation view was reinforced by



## What is it?

It is the exploitation of children and adolescents by visitors, in general, coming from developed countries or even tourists from within the country itself, involving complicity, through direct action or omission, of tourist agencies and tourist guides, hotels, bars, snack bars, restaurants and beach kiosks, waiters and waitresses, doormen, gasoline stations, truck drivers and taxi drivers, houses of prostitution and massage parlors, in addition to traditional pimps.

Source: Cecria data bank (1996).

government propaganda, which, until the 1980s, marketed the image of a country with paradise-like beaches, sensual women and a friendly culture.

**Misleading advertising** – According to the researcher, Liciane Rosseto Ferreira, this tendency was dropped from official propaganda, however publicity produced by private companies still employs this label in reference to the Brazilian woman. For her, even the description of the locations, such as virgin beaches, implies sensuality. Ferreira analyzes this phenomenon as a basis for her doctoral thesis in which she studies sex tourism in Florianópolis, a capital city in southern Brazil, which receives many Argentine tourists in the summer.<sup>3</sup>

In one of its initiatives aiming to eliminate this connection of the national image to sexual exploitation, the federal government through the Brazilian Tourism Ministry carries out surveillance to spot websites, which make this association. In 2011, this governmental organ identified 1,770 web pages using trademarks and logos for Brazilian tourist programs linked to pornography and prostitution.<sup>4</sup> Of the sites notified, 1,100 responded to the Brazilian Tourism Ministry's request and removed or corrected the page content.

The main problem in emphasizing the sensual side of the Brazilian culture as tourist bait is that this places the entire reputation of a nation in jeopardy, according to the view defended by the researcher, Casiana Gabrielli.<sup>5</sup> She explains that when the foreigner arrives in Brazil already holding a negative view of our society and only has contact with prostitutes or girls available for free sex, this negative perception is reinforced. To some extent, the people with whom the foreigner comes in contact become representatives of an entire nation, and the tourist ends up judging the whole by the part.

**Exploiter and exploited** – But no illegal operation is maintained and expands just through the support of mistaken propaganda. It must take advantage of gaps, and this is the case in the business called sex tourism. According to specialists, it has cultural, social, political and legal roots.

The historical reason for this exploitation is indicated by the sociologist, Arim Soares do Bem, in his book *A Dialética do Turismo Sexual* [A Discussion on Sex Tourism] (2005). For this researcher, sex tourism takes place when favorable conditions exist in cultures that send and receive tourists. Soares do Bem believes that the



depreciative manner in which a portion of Europeans view colonized non-European people is a “justification” for exploitation.

The hypothesis of this sociologist is that in the vision of a number of Europeans, the colonization process experienced by Latin America and Asia made the women of these regions, inferior, exotic and sexually exploitable. In Brazil, throughout the centuries this position of exploitation was confirmed through the relationship between the white man, the natives and the slaves of African decadency. Quoting the famous sociologist, Gilberto Freyre, Soares do Bem affirms that there is no slavery without sexual exploitation.

Following this logic, if the point of view of the exploiter is distorted, then that of the individual being exploited is even more disfigured. According to specialists, the Brazilian woman who voluntarily becomes involved in sex tourism has the tendency to hold an unrealistic view of the European. These women – usually of African descent or mixed descent, having a low income – see that in the company of the exploiter they may enjoy eating in good restaurants, receiving new clothes and even, perhaps, get married and have a much better life in a developed country.

Additionally, the exploited woman considers the white man as a superior being to the African descent or mixed race man with whom she lives. So, relating with someone who is kind and rich makes the exploited person feel like a “princess”, stirring up her self-esteem, which, as a general rule, is in a socially vulnerable situation. It is also important to remember that sex tourism reaches beyond the commercial relationship – it involves casual encounters between natives and foreigners, which can also take place because of curiosity and interest in receiving gifts.

### **Cinderellas and the big bad wolf**

– This sad relationship was also portrayed in the documentary *Cinderellas, Lobos e um Príncipe Encantado* [Cinderellas, Wolves, and an Enchanted Prince] (2008), by Joel Zito Araújo. In an interview for the magazine *Raça Brasil* [Brazilian Race],<sup>6</sup> the film director indicates that the consumer-oriented discourse reinforced by the media also nurtures the imagination of the exploited individuals.

In data he gathered in capital cities with a large flow of tourists, this documentary director identified two profiles of individuals who fuel sex tourism. The first is the “well-intentioned”, or in other words, the individual who considers himself a failure in his own country of origin, because he did not attend college and was not successful with women there. According to Araújo, this tourist saves money and comes to Brazil looking for a “summer romance”, which could end in marriage.

The second type of tourist, the filmmaker explains, is malicious. This is the individual who deceives the native women with promises of easy employment and marriage abroad, but has the real intention of trafficking or sexually exploiting these Brazilian women. For this reason, the documentary director warns that becoming involved in sex tourism is “like playing the lottery”. It is a risky gamble that is never worthwhile.

**Crime network** – Evidently, the existence of sex tourism implies the functioning of a complicated network. To operate, this system needs the cooperation or omission of tourist agencies, hotels and motels, gas stations, massage parlors, nightclubs, taxi drivers, police and above all families, in the case of exploited children and adolescents.



## A High Price to Pay

The sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is considered a crime against life. Even if the minor victim consents, sexual contact is considered as an unlawful violation punishable by ten years of imprisonment. The individual paying for the service, and the individual who intermediates or facilitates the encounter commit a crime.

Source: Brazilian Federal Police

After all, this is the third most profitable illicit trade on the planet, only losing out to the trafficking of drugs and arms. According to the UN, this entire mafia annually contaminates the childhood of 2.5 million Latin-American minors. In Brazil, approximately 120,000 children are lured into this underworld.

Disregard of governmental authority and the complicity of the exploited minors' families were evident in the investigative report broadcast on the television program *Conexão Repórter* [Connection Reporter] on June 7, 2010. The production team of the SBT Network, presented by the reporter Roberto Cabrini, portrayed child prostitution in North Brazil, on Marajó Island (the State of Pará), and in the Northeast in Campina Grande (the State of Paraíba).

Four months of investigation revealed shocking images of ten-year-old girls who have sex in exchange for the internal organs of cows. In the case of the Amazon region, the misery of the riverbank populations and their geographic isolation facilitate this crime. In Campina Grande, only 100 meters from the Federal Police building, the television cameras captured individuals recruiting minors.

Perhaps, the most deplorable part in this scene is the absence of the families, because of negligence in protecting their children or because of intentional exploitation of minors. On Marajó Island, mothers themselves take their sons and daughters by boat to the ferries where men and women pay for their sexual service. This is not an isolated fact. According to specialists, these children begin a life of exploitation in their home, with abuse by fathers or relatives and close friends of the family.

**Arms open wide** – Faced with such a devastating and socially complex

situation, what could be done? The answer would involve a set of actions, in the sphere of awareness, prevention and reporting; police clampdowns and legal punishment; and support, shelter and social rehabilitation. For this action, the joint effort of federal and local government, schools, media, non-profit organizations and churches is fundamental.

Since 2002, the role of the magazine, *Quebrando o Silêncio* [Breaking the Silence], and all initiatives linked to this campaign promoted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church are acting in the direction of prevention as the primary form of combating this type of violence. ([www.quebrandoosilencio.org](http://www.quebrandoosilencio.org)). However, since 2009, this campaign pushed beyond the borders of South America through a worldwide project ([www.enditnow.org](http://www.enditnow.org)).

But, organizers recognize that information does not resolve everything. For this reason, they understand that the more than 72,000 Seventh-day Adventist congregations ([www.adventist.org](http://www.adventist.org)) spread throughout the world can serve as receptive communities for the victims of sexual exploitation. In the field of social rehabilitation and income generation, the Seventh-day Adventist Church also has a school system with 7,800 educational units throughout the world and an agency that renders humanitarian assistance and maintains social development projects in 120 countries ([www.adra.org](http://www.adra.org)).

**Confrontation** – At the government level, the Interagency Committee to Confront Violence linked with the Special Secretariat of Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic is the body that unites civil organizations and representation of the three governmental powers under one roof. Created in 2007, this committee is responsible for formulating and proposing public policies for confronting this type of violence.

In the area of fighting this crime and victim recovery, some non-governmental organizations (NGO) are outstanding because of their excellent work. The Associação Curumins [Curumins word of Tupi Guarani origin meaning children] ([www.curumins.org.br](http://www.curumins.org.br)) uses sports and art to rescue the self-esteem and identity of abuse victims in Fortaleza, Ceará. To participate in the project, the adolescent must be attending school.

The project Jepiara, an expression in Tupi Guarani that means, “defend yourself”, also follows this line of action. Led by the NGO, Movimento República de Emaús [Republic of Emmaus Movement] ([www.movimentodeemaus.org](http://www.movimentodeemaus.org)), in Belém Pará, their activities range from sheltering 180 adolescent and child victims or those vulnerable to sexual exploitation to courses and surveillance of the hotel industry. The project is carried out in conjunction with the Brazilian Association of Hotels and has the objective of leading establishments to assume a commitment to a term of conduct aiming to prohibit this type of crime.

**Break the silence** – The laudable work of these NGOs and governmental bodies, which approach this problem with the seriousness it deserves, seems limited considering such a complex criminal network. The problem is structural,

because it takes advantage of the social vulnerability of thousands of minors and has cultural roots in the Brazilian history of dominance and the illusion that the supposed natural sensuality of the women here is a national heritage.

In the face of such a huge challenge, you may feel dismayed and think that your help is not important at all in reversing this situation. Do not deceive yourself! The fact that you have read this article to this point, you are willing to protect your family from this evil and are willing to report any suspicious sexual exploitation activity already moves in the right direction. These are the first and most important steps that you could ever take. ■

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WENDEL LIMA is a journalist.

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## Dial 100

**3 million** reports of various types of violence were recorded from 2004 through the beginning of 2013.

**600 daily reports** recorded, on average, last year.

**Source:** Communication Department of the Brazilian Tourism Ministry.





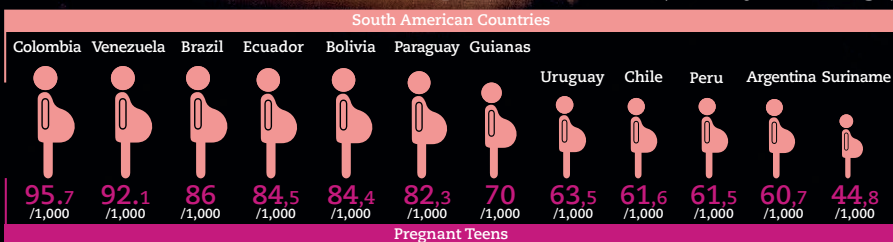
# And now WHAT?

*In South America, the rising number of teenage pregnancies is causing concern*

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood. In some cases, adolescence is interrupted when the young teen becomes pregnant. Since one in every five women in the world have a child before reaching 18 years of age, it is calculated that each year 16 million adolescent mothers give birth. In the poorest regions of the planet, one in every three women becomes a mother in adolescence.

In South America, the number of cases of pregnancy within this age group is quite disturbing. The Inter-American Development Bank<sup>1</sup> (IDB) presents the following figures regarding the adolescent fertility rate:

### Births per 1,000 women (15-19 years of age)



These numbers reflect a disturbing rate, which leads us to consider, as adults – whether in the position of parents, educators or members of society – that the time has come to face this problem and break the silence.

### 1. What factors contribute to adolescent pregnancy?

In view of this reality that reaches into all social and cultural levels, we need to act with urgency. First of all by learning the factors or the causes that lead adolescents to place themselves in such a vulnerable situation.

The causes are as diverse as the number of pregnant teenage girls. The most frequent are:

- **Intended Pregnancy:** There are adolescents who want to become mothers due to various factors: (a) cultural heritage (their great-grandmothers, grandmothers and mothers became pregnant at an early age); (b) a means of escaping from an unstable home; (c) the possibility of establishing a family within an improved economic situation; (d) becoming a mother is the only goal in life; (e) or simply to escape school attendance, among many other reasons.

- **Unintended Pregnancy:**

- a)** *Because of consensual sexual relations:* lack of information regarding birth control, highly erotic media advertising, social pressure from partners to have sexual relations, early sexual debut (12 to 14 years of age), early initiation of alcohol consumption and substance use, which uninhibits adolescents, making them more vulnerable. All of these factors are also added to conduct that is typical for this age group, such as rebellion and a know-it-all attitude.

- b)** *Because of non-consensual sexual relations:* gender violence that may occur within or outside of the family setting.

### 2. Who assumes the responsibility of the pregnancy in adolescence?

Although, as a general rule, the parents are minors, they should assume their new role as parents.

Reality indicates that in the majority of cases, the adolescent mother and her family become responsible for the child. According to surveys, only in 40% of the cases of adolescent pregnancy does the father assume the responsibility of provider. Assuming responsibility does not necessarily imply living together as a couple or getting married, but simply accepting the responsibility of being a father. One of the most frequent causes of paternal role abandonment is due to questioning from friends and family members. Often the question is asked, “Are you sure that this baby is your child?” When teenage fathers want to assume responsibility, frequently they feel the economic impossibility, which makes this task difficult. This situation leads the future grandparents of the baby to become responsible for the infant, although there may be situations where the mother’s family alone – or both families and, at times the father’s family – begin to offer support.

**70% of adolescent pregnancies are unintended.**

The economic aspect weighs heavy, which many times causes the baby’s father to live in his parent’s home and the mother, on the other hand, stays with her parent’s. This causes conflicts and role changes.

### 3. What are the risks of adolescent pregnancy?

Early pregnancy is beyond the expectations linked to this meaningful event.

So, all aspects of development can be affected by risks, such as:

- **Biological:** A lack of essential nutrients can affect the adequate development of the embryo. This can result in miscarriages, premature births, low birth weight due to the fact that the uterus has not totally developed; and babies can be born with health problems and growth disorders.

- **Psychosocial-spiritual:** Fear of disapproval by the family and social circle can lead to the isolation of the future mother (quitting school and abandoning friendships, etc.).



*Of every 100 infants  
born, 15% are born to  
adolescent mothers.*

Feelings of criticism regarding maternal responsibilities and guilt for not carrying out these responsibilities tend to lower the adolescent mother's self-esteem.

Frequent family conflicts are caused by the news of the pregnancy and its later developmental progression.

There are feelings of abandonment and loss when the father does not assume his responsibility.

Anguish and anxiety are often present and caused by the changes in the mother's body.

Guilt and remorse may emerge, depending on the family values, which can bring about a lack of hope and lead to abandoning religious practices.

#### **4. What should be done if an adolescent becomes pregnant?**

The reaction of an adult (whether parent, relative, counselor, or teacher) upon receiving the news that a teenager

is pregnant causes a variety of emotions, such as perplexity, disillusionment, pity and concern for her future.

Some parents feel guilty because they have not acted in a preventive manner, or are ashamed, concerned about public exposure ("What are people going to say?").

However, beyond the guilt feelings and the difficult situation they face, each adult needs to consider the following advice:

- Recognize your feelings and work to accept and support the pregnant minor. This does not mean that you do not have the right to feel frustrated or angry. No! These reactions are normal. But, for the good of the adolescent and the infant, you will need to overcome your feelings.

- Approach the future mother and talk with her: What is most important for the pregnant young girl? What are the concerns she faces? Has she been to a doctor? Is she receiving pre-natal care? Does she know how to care for her health during this phase of her life? What plans does she have or can she make? Is she going to continue her studies? How is the baby's father reacting? Would marriage be the "solution"? What emotional support can the pregnant teen count on? Does she know what to expect as a mother? Does she have hope? How can she strengthen her hope in God?

- If, as an adult, you cannot control your feelings in this situation, seek help from a professional.

As a parent counselor, you can exercise great influence in the future life of this mother and her child. Perhaps you would like for her to have chosen another direction, but her reality is another. Find an adequate manner to support her, verify that she has good pre-natal care, and be prepared to give her attention when she shares her fears and doubts. It is possible



that she and the child's father may discover that with time they may have a better life. Remember that the Lord never abandons us in the midst of our mistakes. His promise is: "Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me." (Psalm 27:10, NIV)

### 5. How to avoid early pregnancy?

There are many suggestions regarding preventive measures regarding this situation. The WHO recommends an increase in the use of contraception by adolescents, reducing coerced sex and support for programs directed toward prevention of adolescent pregnancy.

Many national institutions offer programs similar to those of the WHO, recommending that young people receive solid sex education in the family unit as well as in educational institutions.

From the Christian point of view, our position is:

- Encourage family dialogue so that doubts and fears may be presented. Talk to teens about the appropriate development of a dating relationship, social pressure exerted on dating couples in the light of early sexual initiation, analysis of media and the anti-values presented, respect for the right time for everything, for your body and for the person who you care about, etc.

- Help to build a sustainable life project that includes education, work, marriage, etc.

- Remember that preventing a pregnancy is not only of interest to a woman,

The majority of early pregnancies between 10 and 14 years of age are due to acts of violence.



it is relevant for two people: the man also has the obligation of assuming his responsibility in this direction, as pregnancy places both individuals in a risk situation.

- Recommend that adolescents act firmly in risky or threatening situations, always saying NO when there is pressure to have sexual relations. This type of pressure does not always end in a lasting and stable relationship.

- Promote awareness that it is necessary to abstain from a sexual relationship until an individual has maturity to understand its meaning and responsibility within marital principles.

Some youth think that they should engage in sexual relations. Men want to prove their virility and women, their faithfulness and loyalty by "demonstrating love"; both completely wrong ideas that can result in an unwanted pregnancy. Without a doubt, consideration should be given that the sexual act in the context of marriage provides complete and lasting happiness. The Word of God states, "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ." (Philippians 1:9, 10) ■



Adolescent mothers in Latin America have 1.8 to 2.8 fewer years of education.

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The path toward overcoming rape for victims is painful, because this type of violence considered as torture, is one of the most severe forms of abuse.

Rape dehumanizes the individual, shocks the community and leaves emotional scars that can last a lifetime, if an efficient recovery initiative is not undertaken.

The *Manual of Sexual Abuse Prevention*, published by Save the Children, mentions several consequences resulting from this type of violence, including the following:

## Road to RECOVERY

*Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step. (Martin Luther King Jr.)*

## Short-term consequences

**Physical:** nightmares and sleep disturbances, change in eating habits, loss of sphincter control.

**Behavioral:** alcohol consumption and substance abuse, mental escape, suicidal tendencies or self-mutilation, hyperactivity, decrease in academic performance.

**Emotional:** generalized fear, aggressiveness, guilt and shame, isolation, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, rejection of one's own body.

**Sexual:** inappropriate sexual knowledge for a child's age, compulsive masturbation, exhibitionism, difficulties in sexual identity.

**Social:** poor social skills, social withdrawal, antisocial behavior.

## Long-term consequences

**Physical:** Generalized chronic pain, hypochondria or psychosomatic disorders, sleep disorders and constant nightmares, gastrointestinal problems, eating disorders.

**Behavioral:** suicidal tendencies, alcohol consumption and substance abuse, identity disorders.

**Emotional:** depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, difficulty to express feelings.

**Sexual:** sexual phobias, sexual dysfunctions, lack of sexual satisfaction or incapacity to achieve orgasm, changes in sexual motivation, greater probability of re-victimization and entry into prostitution, difficulty in engaging in sexual relationships.

**Social:** problems in interpersonal relationships, isolation, difficulty with affectional bonds with their children.

These consequences confirm that rape is a violent crime with medical, psychological, legal and social implications.

Nancy Clark and Catherine Kroeger affirm, "the journey toward hope, healing and wholeness will be long and hard" (*Refuge from Abuse* [InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 2004], p. 7). So, those who decided to follow this path are considered survivors.

Thelma\* is among those who struggle against shadows from the past. At 16 years of age, she has a story that neither she nor her parents like to remember. Raped by an uncle when she was 9 years old, her feelings of purity and worthiness were destroyed abruptly. Shyness, isolation, no interest in play or study were the first consequences. Besides this, she began having nightmares that left her frightened and with little sleep for several years.

When her parents noticed these changes in her behavior, they began to take action. Initially, their daughter did not want to talk about the problem. However, some time later, she revealed that she had acted in this manner because she feared her uncle would carry out his promised threats: retaliation.

Fortunately, the aggressor moved far away, and this has eased the victim's tense feelings. But, the greatest contribution for the girl's recovery is her parent's love and community support. Indeed, the role of the family is essential in the physical and emotional recovery of abuse victims.

Her parents and a counselor helped Thelma to take the three steps suggested by Clark and Kroeger (*ibid.*, p. 102-107):

**1. Dare to Dream.** The victim was not in a position to react by herself. And for this reason, she would not have been able to look to the future with hope. However, with the help of her parents and the guidance of a counselor, she caught a glimpse of the possibility of her cure.



Many people can and do rebound from even the most extreme abuse, aided by the support of family and friends, the use of specifically tailored therapies and the privacy, safety and time to digest and come to terms with their experience.

– Erica Goode, *The New York Times*, May 9, 2013.

**2. Find a Listening Ear.** At this time, the ears of parents and counselors have to be bigger than their mouths. Why? Because the victim needs to talk, but is not always ready to. After a while, Thelma gradually opened up her heart and revealed her fears and anxieties, which greatly contributed toward building a trusting environment.

**3. Accept Help.** At first, Thelma thought that she did not have the strength to crawl out of the hole where she found herself. Her self-esteem was at the bottom of that hole also. At this point, the counselor talked about Thelma's talents,

stating that if they were not developed, a precious life would be forgotten. He gave examples of people who had overcome obstacles and touched on two essential points: belief in self- worth and overcoming

anger and resentment. This process lasted almost five years. Her self-esteem re-emerged from the ashes and her feelings of anger were eventually buried.

Today, Thelma regularly participates in church activities of her religious faith. Her shyness gave way to assurance that continues to grow each day. Isolation has changed to interaction with friends. Above all, there is no lack of love or comprehension in her family environment. ■

RUBENS LESSA is a spiritual counselor and journalist.

*\* Not her real name*

## Tips for overcoming sexual violence

- Do not blame yourself for what happened.
- Do not attempt to relieve the pain of the abuse suffered through involvement with: alcohol, drugs, compulsive eating, or self-mutilation.
- Develop creative activities: music, painting, sculpture; and do not forget your spiritual side, your real being.
- Take care of yourself, look in the mirror with your head held high, because you are strong and can overcome; you do not deserve to suffer because of the mistake made by another human being.
- If you are a woman, dress up, put on your best clothes, use perfume; do not forget that you deserve to be happy and you should not hide inside of an unattractive shell.
- Take advantage of the good things in life, even if this comes through learning from your experience.
- Remember that the fact you are alive is a divine gift, considering that many victims of sexual violence do not survive.
- Report the violence, because this will help you to feel you have done what you needed to do. This relieves the guilt of thinking that you have left your aggressor free to abuse other people or perhaps attack you once again.
- Seek assistance from friends, family members, teachers, institutions, support groups, or blogs. Many times talking can completely change your life.
- Avoid situations, people and objects that remind you of what happened. Memories are inevitable, but what makes them constructive or destructive is your attitude regarding facts that are in the past.
- Prepare to help other people, be a volunteer in nursing homes, children's homes, orphanages and other institutions in need of volunteer assistance.
- Read books on topics of faith and hope.

Source: <http://ongsuperandoabusos.blogspot.com.br>

# Call Crisis Hotlines

**Disque-Denúncia**

## Police Precinct for Women's Protection

Call the precinct nearest you.\*

### Delegacia da Mulher

Ligue para o telefone mais próximo de sua residência.

## Dial 190

Some cases of violence need immediate action. Call the police, before it is too late.

## Disque 190

Há casos em que a ação deve ser imediata. Chame a polícia, antes que o pior aconteça.

## Disque 100

Violência sexual contra crianças e adolescentes

**Dial 100**  
Report sexual violence against children and adolescents

## Dial 180

Center for Assistance to Women

## Disque 180

Central de Atendimento à Mulher

\*If you have Internet access, search Google under "delegacia da mulher" and the name of the city or state you are visiting for telephone numbers.



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BREAKING THE SILENCE **15**

The sexual exploitation of children and adolescents degrades the human being and stimulates violence. Currently, hundreds of pages on the Internet associate with the image of South American countries with sex tourism.

Another area of concern is domestic violence, which makes children and women its main victim.



The magazine *Breaking the Silence* is more than a wake-up call against all of this violence: it is a source of assistance for the victims of abuse and serves as a guidebook filled with recommendations and orientation for those who want to participate in the campaign against violence.

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