

THE VILLAIN

Have you ever noticed how we rarely see ourselves in the media or on TV?



ben's place

SPECIALIST SUPPORT
FOR MALE SEXUAL ABUSE SURVIVORS

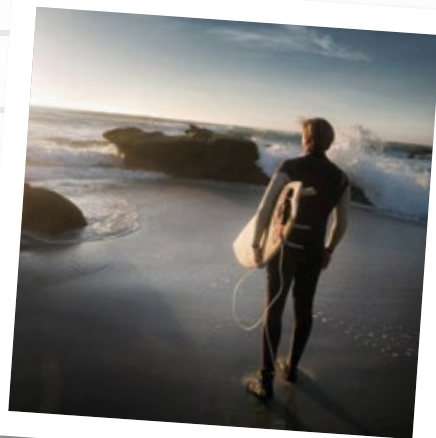
I never saw male survivors anywhere as a teenager so I used to think that I didn't exist. That part of me that relates to being a victim didn't seem to have representation anywhere I looked. I subconsciously searched everywhere to find someone or something to attach all of this fear and shame to. After a while I just concluded that this part of me shouldn't exist. So I pretended as if the abuse didn't happen and that I wasn't that child who had been damaged. All the setbacks that occurred after my abuse were just my fault. I took responsibility for barely graduating from high school. I accepted the failure of relationship after relationship. I understood that if I was going to be alone for the rest of my life then it was through my own doing. I didn't even mind living a life alone because it meant that I never had to confront my inner demons. They would never affect anyone but me and I could hack it, or at least I thought I could.



I was arrogant enough to believe that I had control over the abuse in my life, even as I never identified with it or brought any attention to it. I was above it, yet always below it. It was destroying everything good that came into my life and I still refused its existence. My abuser wasn't my abuser. He loved me and IT didn't exist. I wouldn't let it exist in me. I would feel the depression and never question the source from which it flowed. I would get angry and withdraw from the world because I felt it was always in me and always something I did.

I saw men on the TV and in the media and I found myself cheering on the heroes. The hero was what I wanted to be but I always had more in common with the villain. The villains were always the ones who were beaten and abused as children. They were always denied the right to be living, breathing individuals. In those scenes right before the villain does his or her dirty deed there were the flashbacks of them being utterly violated. It explained to us why they chose to violate others. The serial killer killed because a part of his humanity was taken from him. The prostitute injected heroin into her veins because her father violated her sexually at a young age. I neglected and isolated myself from loved ones because I was just like them.

The hero was something that I never could be because he grew up wholesome and loved. He always had control over his environment. He was unaffected by the swirling chaos around him. I was consumed by the chaos.



The hero is the representation of everything that I could never be. I learned to resent the hero. It is no surprise that we survivors live with our shame much longer than we need to. We may have been victims but we are also educated, highly productive people in society. Like any thinking person we begin to wonder, where are our heroes? If we have no heroes then we need to make our own.



We have to support those few individuals attempting to fill our void. This society always bends to those loud voices of insistent individuals who show resolve. We can speak with our voices, write emails with our fingers, and use our intellect to push our agenda. As survivors, we must be active to create our space in this world.

A few years ago, I watched the first movie in my life where I was able to relate to the hero. It was called Antwone Fisher. He was courageous, intelligent, and determined. He was a survivor of abuse, abandoned by his biological mother. This abuse and abandonment wasn't a prelude to his sinister plan to exact revenge on the world. It was the central purpose to his mission and the film approached the courage of facing your abusers with unblinking eyes. It was a hero's purpose to face your abuse and come out the other side, as a good man. The male survivor was the hero. For once, I didn't resent the hero. I only had love for the hero. I cheered him on with the realization that he was not the person who I wanted to be but he was indeed already a part of me.

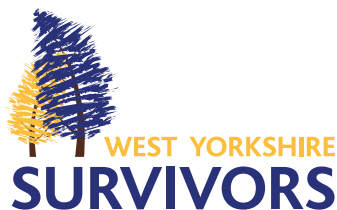
The survivor who uses his or her voice to speak of personal abuse is the greatest kind of hero I could know. I just never knew that we could be THE hero. The survivor is the truth. Their truth is that our vulnerability is our greatest strength as people. We just need to communicate our vulnerability with fierce courage and determination. In the movies, it was always the hero who was unaffected by his environment. Who would have guessed that Hollywood would have had it so wrong all these decades?

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About Chris de Serres

Chris is a father, husband, writer, and advocate for victims of abuse. He co-founded (Wo)Men Speak Out, a nonprofit organization dedicated to eradicating rape, domestic violence, and child abuse in our communities. He enjoys anything his 6-year-old daughter happens to be excited about at the moment. He reads, camps, and climbs in the beautiful Pacific Northwest.



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"Boots and all..."