

JUDITH JONES

My name is Judith Jones. I've lived in LA County since I was about three or four years old, different parts, of course. I turned 65 last month, so a long time. Right now, I live in Lancaster—been here since about 2011. I lived in Palmdale before that. I've been up in the Antelope Valley close to 30 years. I lived in Los Angeles since I was about four years old up until my first daughter was born, who is now about 30. So that tells you a long time.

'That's the generational curse.'

It starts from my childhood. It was me and my mom. During my childhood, my mother was a great provider. She made sure I had everything. I remember Christmas morning toys from the front door to the back door. She put me in private school and worked hard to be that kind of a mother. But there was no nurturing. There was no love really. Her love was given by things. I needed her to love me, to accept me, to affirm me when I did good, not always punish me for making a mistake.

I found out later that I was a shamed baby. My mother had me out of wedlock, and my grandparents were devout Catholics. Abortion, birth control – all that was off the table. My grandmother had five babies, my mother being one of them. My grandfather was a womanizer, an abuser, an alcoholic. My mother and her siblings never got nurtured because my grandmother was just trying to figure out how to take care of five children. That's the generational curse. It sets the stage. Moving forward into different relationships was me looking for love in all the wrong places. I wanted to be loved, truly loved, cared for, cared about. My mother didn't know how to do that.

'Behind closed doors, no one has any idea what's going on.'

I was 29 years old. I was at a stoplight. Some guy in this sleek-looking, red Corvette toots his horn and looks and smiles and rolls his window down and wanted my phone number. I said, "If you can remember it, give me a call" because the light turned green. I sped off and he calls me. I thought, *well, how interesting is that?* He was only 22 [years old], but I fell for his charming ways.

We had a couple of conversations and went out. He told me he was married, but that he was separated. I remember being on this trip to Vegas with my mom and I get this call from a lady. I had no idea who she was. Long story short, she was his wife. I was devastated, embarrassed. She could tell I was genuine. I told her, "He did mention he was married, but that you guys are separated." She said, "Oh no, we

still live together.” I apologized a bazillion times and I said, “You don't have to worry.” We weren't really involved at that point. I went on and, best I could, enjoyed my weekend. When I got back home, he called me to see how the weekend was and I hung up in his face. He kept calling back and I finally thought to face this and address this. I said, “How dare you! You're married. Your wife called me.” He said, “Can I please tell my side?” He proceeded to tell me how she went back to Mississippi for a family reunion and was cheating with some guy. In his mind, when she came back, the marriage was over. BS story, but *did you fall for it, Judy?* Of course, because again, he's a charmer. I'm wanting to be loved. He's a handsome young guy. That was the beginning of 10 years of abuse – mental, emotional, verbal, and physical.

I met his family. His dad was very handsome. His mom, when I met her, she was in a wheelchair from a stroke six months prior. He had two sisters. We would get together with his family doing stuff, my family doing stuff. Everybody loved him. I started taking notice of his anger and verbal abuse with the name calling. That's the interesting piece about an abuser. Behind closed doors, no one has any idea what's going on, how they're talking to you, treating you, cursing you out every day.

‘That's not an easy thing to get out of.’

Sometimes an abuser doesn't show all their abuse right away. But the signs are there. I got pregnant and lost the baby early on. Then got pregnant not long after, lost the baby a second time. But I continued to ignore the signs. I continued in this relationship. I mean, he had that other side to him, you know? Loving, kind, caring and whatnot. When I had my first baby, I was working a great job. [My employers] pushed me out and forced me to be a stay-at-home mom, which he sort of encouraged. Saying, “No worries, I'll take care of you and the baby.” The power and the control, that was something I really took notice of. He had me under his thumb, especially after having the baby. That's not an easy thing to get out of. I remember him cursing me out all the time, and talking to me like I didn't matter.

He would go to my mom, who not only liked but sided with him. Remember, this is the mom who didn't protect me as a little girl. I'm telling her about this abusive man that talks to me crazy, disrespects me. She was never like, “I'm so sorry to hear that. You bring that baby and come here and stay with me.” It was more or less, “You'll work it out” or “What did you say to make him mad?” type thing. People don't realize that those are things that cause a woman to stay in abusive relationships – when you don't have that support system, when you don't believe when I'm telling you that someone's hurting me, abusing me, sexually abusing me, cursing me out, whatever. You really feel like *at least this man shows me some kind of love*.

He was gone a lot. That's oftentimes what cheaters and abusers do. They move their families out way far somewhere while they still are able to continue with their habits. He and his dad had a business down in the marina. He had that hustle spirit mentality, always out there in the streets. I found out his father

was abusive to him and to his mother. Instead of me using that as a red flag, I thought, *maybe I can save him or help him*, all while he abused me. I considered leaving, but I had no way to go. I couldn't go live with my mom. I had no job. I surrendered all my independence to him. That almost got to me more than continuing to be abused by this man. *Judy, you gave up every part of you to him. You have nothing now. You have no job, no income. Your self-esteem is going way down.* I don't know if shelters were around and talked about back then.

He had two sisters; one I was very close with. I would always share with her and tell her [about the abuse], but I started to discover that old saying, “Blood is thicker than water.” She was the one who actually shared stories about how he was abused by their dad, that he was beaten so bad one time that he went and hid in the dryer. When I hear this, all the more I thought, *I've got to be there for him*. I get pregnant again. He wanted a boy. I knew then that I wasn't happy, and I really shouldn't be in this relationship. But you know, you want to be loved and you stay in it thinking that things will change. *Maybe somewhere down the road, it'll get better. Maybe the second baby. Maybe if he has a son.* I thought all these things in my head while I continued in this relationship that was not healthy. It was abusive – emotionally, mentally, verbally, for sure. Somewhat physical, but he wasn't there a lot because he worked.

We had the second baby. It wasn't a boy; it was a girl. He went into a little lightweight depression, but I think also he was just an angry man. He would go buy blue diapers if I sent him out to get diapers. I'm like, “Dude, it's a girl. Get over it.” Now we've got two kids. I'm trying to raise these two kids with no job, still dealing with the unhappiness and the unhealthy relationship, the abuse. Then my body was doing some weird stuff, and I thought, *please don't let me be pregnant. Please Lord.* I went to the doctor to do bloodwork. I'll never forget. The lady came in there and she showed me the test – it was positive. I literally broke down and cried. *I don't want three babies by this man.*

There was a group of us that we all used to play cards and fry fish and have gatherings. There was a lady I became friends with in this group. Her two kids and my three kids were besties. We became very close. Long story short, people started to tell me, “Judy, what's going on between [my guy] and this best friend?” Turns out, they were together. It had been going on for a year right underneath my nose. She got pregnant by him. She knew that he was abusive. I would share with her all the horrible stuff – the cussing me out, the abusive behavior, the staying out all night and not coming home. What she was doing as my best friend was using what I'm telling her to her advantage. I told her, “There's no way I'm going to sleep with him. I mean the way he talks to me and treats me.” She gave him more sex than he can handle. I remember telling her one time that he didn't come home till 4 a.m. on a weekend, and I put the door club on the door because you're not just going to come in and out of here when you feel like it. Plus, I didn't know if I was going to get smacked on or beat on. I guess she called [him] and said, “I understand why you didn't come home ‘til 4 a.m. Who were you with? Because you certainly weren't with me.”

'If you don't get out of here, you're gonna die today.'

I remember one time we were going to have a big gathering, a BBQ and pool party. That day I said, "I'm going to go start picking up stuff from the store." He said, "Okay, I'm going to get the yard cleaned up and ready for the thing." I leave, wandering all around different stores. I can't remember if I left the kids with him or if they were outside playing. When I came home, [a woman from the neighborhood] was there. They were drinking and the yard hadn't been done. He looked at me and said something like, "B---h, don't question me." I'm like, "No. I'm angry as I rightfully should be." I got snatched and dragged and threw over the couch. I'm scared to death. It did something to my face because I could feel it swelling up. I realized, *okay, Judy, this is physical abuse*. The verbal, I was sort of used to, but now I can see the physical is escalating. I went to grab the phone to call 911 because it was that bad. He ran to the back. I knew he had a gun back there. I thought, *Judy if you don't get out of here, you're gonna die today. You're gonna die*. I shout out the front door. I'm running down the street with the phone in my hand. I go beating on the door of my neighbor. She lets me in, and I said, "Please don't tell him I'm here." All I could think of and worry about is *what are we going to do for tomorrow? We got all these people coming we've already invited and got all this food*. I don't know what to do. I'm telling her, "I can't go back there. I can't deal with this anymore." I said, "I need to get the kids here because I don't know what he's going to do." I ended up staying there the whole night. Come to find out, [he and this neighbor] were sleeping together. I didn't find out 'til later.

That was the form of his cheating abuse. I always felt like I was running into the enemy camp. The first [person he cheated with], I thought we were dear friends. I mean like sisters. I needed to know the degree in the level of cheating to where [he] had no regard for me as a human being, as his partner, his wife, the mother of his three children – he had no regard for me at all. [The first friend he cheated with told me] he would take her to Catalina, and I thought, *he wouldn't take me and the kids to the park. But he's taking her on trips?* She had two kids, and he would give her money. We're over here struggling. He was cheating, sleeping with everyone. My cousin's wife – I found out he was sleeping with her.

'I've got to get help.'

Abusers affect the entire family. It affects the entire household. The kids knew. They didn't really comprehend it because they were still young. Even though they witnessed the verbal abuse, he was never abusive to the children. I'm grateful for that, blessed by that. I kind of found that interesting. All the abuse was on me. We get to a point where I've got three kids. This man is physical, abusing me mentally, verbally, emotionally, and now cheating with everyone near and dear to me in my circle. I was drinking, smoking. I became an abuser to my children. I'm yelling and screaming and cursing and always going on to my kids, so

they're damaged to this day. I was one step out of the crack house. To get out of the pain in my head, I was really going to turn to drugs.

I really felt and heard the voice of God. The Spirit of God says, "No, you have three kids. They need you." I knew I couldn't turn to any kind of drugs or a substance to numb the pain. I always thought, *I've got it. I got to stay strong. I've got to survive this. I got to deal with this.* One of my best friends had come to stay with me. She told him, "I've been friends with Judy for years, and I've never seen her like this. I don't suggest you come anywhere near." I basically had snapped. I was whipping [the kids]. I'm already angry and abusive and broken. I've got to get help.

I remember calling one of my cousins at 3:30 a.m. I called her and I said, "I can't stay here anymore." She said, "Cousin, say no more. Come." I got my kids in the middle of the night. I remember throwing them in the car. We drove down to LA, and I stayed with her for a little while...couldn't go to my mom. He called her and told her I'm keeping the kids from him. I'm doing this and that to him. He was able to get my mom on his side.

'The scars are still here.'

He wasn't just an abuser. He was very vengeful. I filed a restraining order against him. and he called me, and he said, "If you don't remove that, I will come find you and I will kill you." He wasn't the kind that would abuse you and bring you gifts to make up for it. He was the kind that would say, "Well b---h, if you didn't talk too much, or if you didn't have an attitude, or if you did this, then I wouldn't treat you and talk to you like I do." He always found a way to belittle me. He always left me for dead or left me like out in the desert like a piece of trash. Never cared anything about me. Never mind the individual, but just as the mother of your three kids. Once I went to put my card in the ATM to get some money out to go get some food or some groceries. [He was] taking all the money out. I had no money. We lost every home.

The way I survived is because I realized, *you know what, Judy? You've always had to fight for yourself. Your mother never fought for you and protected you. She never believed in you.* The emotional damage and the hurt, the scars are still here. That's what I want people to know about abusive relationships. While that big old' gash on my face has healed, the emotional wounds and scars are deep rooted. I should have ran when the wife called. I should have ran when he first cursed me and called me a "b---h."

'I'm a survivor.'

Society thinks we stay in it because we love them. I love him. But I also had nowhere to go. I was afraid to go. I had three kids. It's not easy to say, "Can you help us?" That was another reason I stayed. I

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had surrendered all of me to him. I don't think that I ever really told myself I deserve better because I didn't really think that I did.

I'm 65 [years old] and people say, "Are you still tripping on that? It was years ago. You should be over that or you should be over him." But you don't ever forget. I had to tap back into the deep inner me, who I am. I realized that I survived all the bruises. I survived all the beatings. I survived all the cheating. I was going to go to the dope man but I didn't. I realized I'm a survivor. I'm not a victim, I'm a victor. I want to be able to one day love and tell other women, "You know what? You do deserve better. Love is not supposed to hurt."

