

Anonymous

'It's second-hand trauma.'

I live in Tarzana. My life experience navigating violence has affected me psychologically. It was not physically directed onto me; it's second-hand trauma. But the older I get, the more I realize I still carry that pain. I'm trying to move from it, but I don't think I can.

I was in a household where my father was physically abusive to my mother. I can still see how it affects her. I relive it in my head every so often...certain things you see that you can't erase from your mind. Seeing my father punch my mom on her body and her face, literally trying to hurt her, even while she was pregnant. I'm there, my sister's there, and we're screaming.

As a teenager, I saw my father get in bed with my sister. I never told anybody. I mean, it just happened. Sometimes I think it's a dream, but I know what I saw because it's something that I can't forget. I don't even think my sister knows that I know. I was pretending I was sleeping and I saw him try to do it. I don't remember what happened after that. It was awkward; I don't think that's something I could ever bring up to him. We're older and we talk maybe two, three times a year.

I made a painting about it. That was the best thing I could do. Is that violent? There are so many different types of violence. All I know is (that) when I see what my sister is going through with her relationships and kids, I'm like, you were robbed; you were raped. I feel like it's manifested in different things and I don't know I can talk to her about it. It's not something I can talk to a lot of people about. I don't know if that's why I don't trust the male species, or maybe it has something to do with it. I definitely keep a certain abstract distance.

I thought this (project) might be a place that it can be written down and somebody else can read about it and get something from it. I'd say talk to a young person, maybe talk to an authority or somebody outside of family. As an adult, if you're traumatized or experienced something like that and it still haunts you, get a therapist.

I'd like policy makers to amplify resources so that people know they have a safe place to go if they're going through something. Teach people what trauma and abuse look like; a lot of people don't even know that they're being abused until it's too late. I was in a relationship before I moved to LA where I didn't know; it wasn't physical but it was manipulation. I was scared to not have someone because then I'd have to face my sexuality--my own truth. I was vulnerable and he was taking advantage of me. So, policy makers, push those resources to the forefront.

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