

Pimping Innocence: This is me at 14

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As I saw the influx of Americans responding to the “this is me at 14” which was recently created by an accusation against a prominent Judge and Politician in Alabama, I was impressed that there seemed to be a joining together of liberal and conservative minds to celebrate the 14 yr. old child in our society. I then read a powerful story about Diana Nyad, a celebrated athlete and the first person to swim from Cuba to Florida. She relates how as a naïve child of 14 she was sexually assaulted by her swimming coach. Her words brought back the words of so many people who gave me their disclosures of sexual assault and the secrets they felt they had to keep. She illustrates the impact on her by saying “the trauma has lodged in an obscure corner of my soul. I refuse to believe it’s a lifelong imprint, yet, with age 70 in clear view, I admit to wondering whether I will ever entirely heal that young girl who was pinned down”. Ms. Nyad concludes “For me, being silenced was a punishment equal to the molestation. Legal prosecution proved time and time again to be futile, but I could at least regain my own dignity each time I uttered my truth. I’ve been speaking out, loud and strong, for nearly five decades now. It has been crucial to my own health. It has energized others to speak out, too”.

It's time to speak out and support our 13-15 year old "children" who are being marketed and sold into sexual slavery by those who seek financial gain and have no concern about the gain earned through the pain and agony suffered by a child. It's also time to speak out about the purveyors or the consumers within the sex slavery who assuage their minds with the knowledge that they aren't pedophiles. Finally, it's time to reclaim our "adolescent children" and bring them back into protection from those who hide behind benign terms such as "pimps" and "johns".

As I was researching this topic I came across a blog where a 29 year old male was asking a psychologist if it was perverted for him to be more attracted to a 14 year old girl than a woman in his own age group and if he was actually a pedophile. He was much relieved when the psychologist allayed his fears by assuring him that a 14 year old girl was not pre-pubertal and therefore he did not have to worry about being a pedophile. As disturbing as this may sound it truthfully reveals the state of thought by the APA (American Psychiatric Association) who has rejected a proposal to have the words "prepubescent and pubescent child" added to the definition of Pedophilic Disorder. Presently a person over the age of 16 may be diagnosed as a pedophile only if they have "over a period of at least 6 months, recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children (generally age 13 years or younger)" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013 p. 697). Amazingly enough even though most laws protect our 14/15 year olds, it is not seen in the mental health arena as being deviant when an adult has an exclusive pattern of arousal to a 14 year old boy or girl. Further, having recently been cross examined vociferously on the subject of prepubescent age, there is a strong likelihood that the ages of 12 and 13 will not be accepted as prepubescent in diagnosing pedophilic disorder unless there is evidence provided of prepubescent physical characteristics. In this particular case the accused had admitted to sexually assaulting 36 boys (ages 12-15) and if it had not been for the latest victim being a 12 year old boy who was clearly prepubescent, the diagnosis of pedophilia would have likely been rejected.

While I applaud the fact that most western countries have the age of sexual consent at 16 or above, I see 3 years (13-16) of a child's life to be inadequately protected, not just by a lack of due consideration in the courts, but by society in general. This is not just apathy but seems to be a concerted effort to normalize the behaviour of those who prey on our children. Their arguments are summed up by Allen Frances M.D. who was the chair of the DSM IV Task Force (Frances, 2011):

"Evolution has programmed humans to lust for pubescent youngsters--our ancestors did not get to live long enough to have the luxury of delaying reproduction. For hundreds of thousands of years, sex followed closely behind puberty. Only recently has society chosen to protect the moratorium of adolescence and to declare as inappropriate and illegal a sexual interest in the pubescent. This is a wonderful idea, but you can't change human nature by fiat. Surveys show that sexual interest in pubescent youngsters remains very common and anyone who doubts the numbers should do a study of Calvin Klein ads". He adds "if an illustrative age is kept at all in DSM 5, it should be lowered to reflect the current earlier onset of puberty"

What I glean from that statement is that this is all about how we are programmed by evolution and so it's natural and normal and that it's normal reproductive behavior. I'm not sure how he figures lusting

after a 13/14 year old boy would be evolutionarily programmed for reproduction. Are we to base the protection of our children on surveys that show a sexual interest in them and Calvin Klein ads that perpetuate this deviant behavior? Finally, it is true that there is an earlier onset of puberty currently so shouldn't we be concerned that we may soon be discussing the 10/11 year old child as being left out in the next version of the DSM-5?

The World Health Organization in its International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) defines Pedophilia as a sexual preference for children of prepubertal or early pubertal age. (WHO, 1992, p. 219). This includes our 14 year olds as it should but I fear that this may not be upheld in the next version of the ICD. We are headed in the wrong direction and being led by academics who do not live in the real world and hopefully inadvertently are opening our vulnerable 13-14 year old sons and daughters to callous individuals who prey on others to gratify their own selfish needs.

Although many laws declare that any person under the age of 18 is a child, the law protecting children from sexual crimes does not provide young people age 13 and 14 the same level of protection as younger children. These children fall through the cracks in society, without the same basic protections as younger children to be kept safe, recover or get justice. The investigative mandate of many Child Protection Section includes: (1) all complaints concerning sexual abuse of children under 14 years old; (2) sexual assault complaints pertaining to youths between 14 and 17 years old where the suspect is in a position of trust or authority over the youth (such as group homes, schools, etc.); (3) all serious physical assaults and neglect issues pertaining to children under 14 years old; (4) incidents of "stranger" abductions of children under 14 years old. So I ask, who is watching out for our 14 year old children?

As 13–15 year olds cannot legally consent to sex, they are protected (but only if the defendant could not reasonably believe the child was 16). People who sexually exploit children particularly prey on the most vulnerable. They will go to great lengths to target vulnerable young people, using gifts, affection, money, alcohol, drugs - or the promise of love. Victims are commonly teenagers in the care system, with backgrounds of abuse and neglect, learning disabilities or with mental health problems.

Sexual slavery is a multi-billion dollar industry. It hits the most fragile and vulnerable people in our societies. Twenty-seven per cent of those trafficked are children. More than one in four people who should be enjoying their childhood are being robbed of it instead, exploited in brutal and unimaginable ways. Up to 60 per cent of victims are women. When you account also for young girls, this figure becomes a harrowing 75 per cent (Ban Ki-moon, 2014).

The size of the underground commercial sex economy in 2007 was \$290 million in Atlanta alone. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 1 in 6 child runaways end up becoming victims of sex trafficking. Grooming gangs and pimp-run sex operations have sprung up where authorities have arrested hundreds of abusers. Child sex-traffickers routinely use the internet to pimp out children. Pimps and traffickers view the underground sex economy as a low-risk, high-reward enterprise. They report incomes from \$5,000 to \$32,833 a week. Slavery is growing because trafficking is so lucrative — a pimp can earn \$280,000 a year from one sex-trade worker (Carville, 2015).

The MTV show "Pimp My Ride" depicts the word "pimp" being used as synonymous with "cool" and "top-of-his-game." This is a benign term that seems to bring legitimacy to an industry that is violent and dehumanizing. Pimp, a Purveyor In Misogynous Prostitution (PIMP). One who procures sexual services for men and fuels the aggression toward women. It is my belief that we have too long been soft on these parasites who are willing to gain from others' misery. The word "pimp" does not adequately conjure up the psychopathic monster who uses charm to seduce girls and young women into his snare and once caught in the web, uses violence and drugs to keep the prey as puppets in a highly lucrative play. As someone who has encountered many of these individuals, both as a police officer and later as a forensic psychologist, I have no hesitation using the terms slave traders and psychopath. Some of the highest scores I have rendered on the Psychopathy Checklist- Revised (PCL-R) were to these sexual slave traders whose charm, manipulative ability, callous, lack of empathy and remorse, and parasitic lifestyle were readily evident. Their psychopathic charm allows them to coerce the targets they choose and turn them into property to be owned and controlled. They choose this trade as it is less risky than committing other crimes and "risk reward" is at its height. They tell me that they are "managers" and "security" in the game. They also tell me that they avoid "minors" due to fear of arrest but I know better because a 14 year old girl or boy is a valuable commodity...remember "high risk/high reward".

He has "pimpin" tattooed across his knuckles, two tear drops on his cheek and "f--- all bitches" on his chest. Matthew Deiacio is facing 19 charges, including human trafficking, assault causing bodily harm, unlawful confinement and kidnapping. He awaits trial in Toronto. Deiacio says "most of these girls, like I said, they're broken. It's not hard; you just gotta answer their call. You get in there, you find the crack; like some are drugs, some are just, they need to hear 'I love you.' " But, he adds, it's all an illusion because "there is no love in the sex trade". Deiacio no longer uses love to lure women into the sex trade. "I'm not going to sit here and lie to them and say, 'Oh, I love you.' I don't. I love my money" (<http://projects.thestar.com/human-sex-trafficking-ontario-canada/>).

Sex Trade Activists are downplaying statistics indicating that many girls started into prostitution at age 14-15 and that they feel like slaves who would love to get out. The activists downplay this reality so the consumers (commonly known as "Johns") will not feel they are doing any harm in purchasing sex. I believe the activists can relax on their concerns because those purchasing sex have little capacity for empathy and remorse. As a society we need to ramp up our efforts to reduce the slave purchase and particularly the illegal sexual exploitation of girls and boys within the slave trade. The first thing we need to do is change the nomenclature and refer to these "Johns" as "Sexually Inadequate Curb Crawlers" or SICC. Now we know they don't purchase sex because they are sick; this action does not necessarily belie a mental illness or sickness. They choose to purchase boys and girl because they are sexually and socially inadequate (SICC). Perhaps this terminology would have more effect than the hope that these individuals would see themselves as victimizers. Former United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon caps it well in saying: "The scale of human trafficking is atrocious. The silence that conceals this crime is disgraceful. We have to speak out because the victims are living in fear for their lives. We have to raise our voices for them. That means confronting the social and economic conditions that abet this crime. It means arresting the traffickers. And above all, it means protecting the victims" (Hagar International, 2017).

While most types of sexual crimes against children rose in 2016, the biggest increase was in incidents of sexual interference, the act of touching any person under the age of 16 for sexual purposes. sexual violations against children reported in 2016, a spike of 30 per cent from 2015. Child pornography offences have exploded by more than 200 per cent in the last decade (Harris, 2017). The United Nations Convention on the rights of the child (Article 1): defines a 'child' as a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the monitoring body for the Convention, has encouraged States to review the age of majority if it is set below 18 and to increase the level of protection for all children under 18. (UN, 1989). Assessment of data from Demographic and Health Surveys in 64 developing countries led to the conclusion that boys and girls aged 14 and younger are universally "too young" to make safe and consensual transitions to partnered sexual activity that includes coitus; that 15–17-year-olds may or may not be too young, depending on their circumstances; and that 18-year-olds are generally "old enough" (Dixon-Mueller, 2008).

Adolescence is one of the most rapid phases of human development where biological maturity precedes psychosocial maturity. The characteristics of both the individual and the environment influence the changes taking place during adolescence and younger adolescents may be particularly vulnerable when their capacities are still developing. Many of the health-related behaviours that arise during adolescence have implications for both present and future health and development. Sexually active adolescents are at higher risk for acquiring STIs due to behavioral, biological, and physiological factors. Alcohol use and obesity in early adolescence not only compromise adolescent development, but they also predict health-compromising alcohol use and obesity in later life, with serious implications for public health. Adolescent behavioral choices have severe consequences whether it is lifelong alcohol/ drug abuse, incarceration, or even an early death. One of the most cogent arguments for increased intervention into the lives of our 13-14 year old children surfaces in the adolescent brain development literature. Theories of adolescent brain development concur on the importance of how delayed maturation of the prefrontal cortex (PFC) and other frontal regions relate to developmental immaturities in cognitive control, attentional regulation, response inhibition, and other relatively advanced cognitive functions (Spear, 2013). These developmental immaturities give way to increases in novelty seeking, sensation seeking, and risk taking, and greater per-occasion alcohol use (Steinburg, 2010). Simply put, decision-making, organization, impulse control and planning for the future occur later in adolescence and changes are often not complete until age 22. So we have our 13-14 year old daughter or son who does not have inhibitory control in emotional circumstances and gravitates toward risk taking behavior seeking reward and pleasure. Reward seeking was found to increase and peak in mid adolescence (i.e., approximately 14–15 years) and then to gradually decline into adulthood (Caufman et al, 2010). This age of 14 is a critical time of life where experiences are critical in altering trajectories away from or toward positive or negative outcomes. With this information, would we not want to protect our child even more?

It's time to reflect on the theme "this is me at 14" and understand how ill equipped we were at that age to handle the onslaught of physical and emotional change. Fast forward to 2017 and zoom in on the Pied Pipers who lead our children away while learned members of society pontificate on whether children are adolescent or juvenile.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer long ago said “The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children”. I might add...it is what we do for all our children, even our 14 year olds.

Author’s Biography

Dr. Matt Logan was a police officer and criminal investigative psychologist with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for 28 years. Presently he consults with criminal justice agencies worldwide, provides expert evidence in court, and is a dynamic conference speaker.

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