Gray Ceilings

February 11, 2011 By Aundaray Guess

Gray ceilings.

The ceiling was gray. I remember that much as I lay on the bed looking up. It wasn't a dark gray but something like a dull chalkboard type of gray. I stared at it as the sun danced on it and in the air, little pieces of dust floated in the light, dancing in the moment. Outside I could hear the laughter of kids. I made out the deep laughter of my brother and the giggling of my sister and the others I couldn't quite make out. If I could I would have walked to the window and looked out to see who was having so much fun without me. But I was trapped. I was stuck doing what was told to me as being my job. I couldn't move from the bed until he was done doing what he wanted to do to me.

I was only 7.

He was a cousin who was much older than me and we would always be over his house as our mother left us there as she went to work. She couldn't understand why I would cry when she dropped us off or sometimes why I would refuse to get out the car. But then she'd give me the mother look that said"If I have to drag you out, I'm going to make you really cry." And out I would go.

Sometimes I was lucky as I would run off with my siblings and get in a few rounds of hide and seek or hopscotch, but it would eventually happen. He would appear and I knew I had to go to work.

The hardness of the concrete ground would be quickly replaced by the lumpy hard mattress. And there I would be, back looking at the gray ceiling. Each time looking up I would notice new things. For instance I didn't know if they knew there was a crack forming. I should have also let them know that small pieces of paint were starting to peel away. Maybe that would have the right thing to do. I told myself that as long as I focused on the gray ceiling I wouldn't have to be in the world that I was in. That by looking at the gray ceiling I could pretend the crack was a railroad track and soon a train would be riding along with smoke coming from the front car and a red caboose following it and maybe there was room for me on that train.

On rainy days it was hard to see the crack and the gray ceiling was black. Those were the times I just closed my eyes and imagined I was somewhere else. Anywhere else but here.

It lasted for a year.

I never told anyone. He never threatened me or said he would kill my family. I just didn't know how to tell. I figured it was too late that by letting it happen for so long they would think I asked for it and therefore I must have liked it. So it became my secret.

I think the gray ceiling also stole my innocence as I noticed growing up that I would say sexual things that only adults said. I would do things adults did, my actions becoming sexual. I wasn't acting like the young boy I was supposed to be.

I thought to myself maybe I did ask for it as I started to look at other men and wonder if they wanted me to look at their gray ceilings. In high school it was worse. I pretended I knew all about sex. If there was anything you needed to know I knew it. Even my clothes changed. They were once loose but started to form a tightness around me. As if I was putting myself on display.

I still never told anyone, not until I was in my late twenties.

The wall I had built around my private secret started to develop cracks just like the grey ceiling. I tried to patch it up but each time I'd think I patched one crack another crack would form getting bigger and bigger and soon they came tumbling down and the memories that I thought I buried, there they were playing for me like a movie.

I started to remember everything. It was like a flood as everything came crashing in, each detail, each sound, and each silent prayers of please God let this be over and most of all his face. I started to remember his face. At that moment the childhood that escaped me came back as I found the deepest corner and in a huddled cried. Tears I denied myself to run free when I was younger.

And then it made sense why I was angry. Why I didn't let people hug me or touch me. Why I didn't let them get close. Why I couldn't look at my own reflection in the mirror. I wasn't blind anymore.

As horrible as the experience I went through as a child I did receive one gift from the experience. I received the gift of forgiveness. I showered myself first with this gift and had to make peace with the fact that I didn't do anything wrong and that I was a victim therefore should no longer walk with shame as my shadow.

And with the help of God I gave the gift of forgiveness to my offender. I had to because without doing this I would never grow. I would be forever in a place of gray. I would be stuck. And once I forgave I started to see colors again. There were no more gray ceilings.

I discovered for me to get to my true place I had to make peace with the past.

I now dream in color.

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