

STATEMENT OF JANE BEDELL

June 5, 2014

My name is Jane Bedell. I was sexually abused by Bob Rusch, my 7th grade teacher. I was 12 when the abuse began. No child should have to suffer sexual abuse. And those who do, like me, should be able to be protected by the grownups around them and by laws of our state.

I came forward, with my brave friends, because I want the everyone to know, as Nancy and Sarah's mom said, what a "monster" he was. He preyed on me, and on other girls. We were children. We trusted him. He was our teacher. He betrayed our trust. No other grown-ups at the Woodward School - to my knowledge - came forward to protect us.

It has taken me over 40 years, many conversations, hearing the stories of other survivors, having the support of my family and much much more to come forward.

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But it is important to come forward - to show the perpetrators of the world and all those who would allow them to abuse children and go unprosecuted, that by breaking the silence, by finding our voices, by coming together to overturn the archaic statute of limitations laws in New York State and in this country that allow child abusers to go unprosecuted.

We can do what the grown-ups around us back then could not or would not do.

I have come forward to help set the record straight about what happened to me, and to help protect our children from those adults who would abuse and harm them.

STATEMENT OF NANCY SMAHL

June 5, 2014

My name is Nancy Smahl. I was a student at Woodward.

It is a sad day today to have to stand here and make a statement like this. I was a victim of child abuse. I hid this fact most of my life. I buried the facts and I lived with the shame. I felt responsible.

But it is also a good day. Why? Because today we are ready as adult women to admit and accept that this happened to us, that we were victims and that we were not responsible for what was done to us as children. It took us this long to be ready to come out and be strong and secure in ourselves and understand the depth of the abuse.

Our abuser, Bob Rusch should be punished even today. His supposed words of guilt are meaningless unless he accepts responsibility and punishment. Just like we are still victims, he is still the teacher who used his position of authority of trust

and took away our innocence and violated all boundaries while teaching at the Woodward School.

New York's Statute of Limitations laws do not protect us, the victims. Instead, the law serves to protect him, and to protect the other adults and the institutions around and after him that allowed the abuse to stay hidden.

Today is a good day because we are speaking out to encourage all of you who are victims of child abuse to come out and fight against these restrictive laws, and to fight against the shame and guilt you were taught to feel. I know that there are other victims out there like us, older and wiser that remain silent. If we all have a voice, we can speak up to our politicians and make change.

I want to thank Mariann Wang and Gloria Allred for being so supportive during this process of telling our story which is a warning to all perpetrators who think their crimes will go unchallenged.

STATEMENT OF LISA YOUNG

June 5, 2014

My name is Lisa Young. I attended Woodward School in Brooklyn from first through eighth grade. I had Bob Rusch as my teacher in 7th grade. He sexually molested me.

It took me years to even pull myself out from Rusch and his life. When I finally was able to, he punched me in the stomach. I was about 15 years old, he was a grown man, over six feet.

It's taken a long time and a lot of work to bring myself back. It's taken a lot of help and therapy.

I lost trust in people.

It's finally ok to come forward now.

For some of us, who can, we need to be able to tell what happened to us.

We are not the ones who should feel bad or ashamed or alone.

I want to add my voice to the many who have already come forward, who inspired me, gave me hope. They provide a spark of bravery.

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I want to help remove the stigma of having had this happen to us, to me, and the stigma of living with this.

My hope is that the more of us who come forward, the easier it will be for other victims to also come forward, or at least to take some comfort in not feeling alone.

That is what happened for me, as I saw the brave souls come forward and heard, and understood I could also have a voice.

I feel fortunate to have found support, acceptance, and people to be with, which was and is incredibly important.

It has been finding these other women that has helped me, little by little, to begin to feel some trust, have some faith, believe in goodness in other people. I am still working on it.

In joining together, we can push, we can add our collective voices and energy to try to move towards some justice, in our little corner of this crazy world.