

Engaging Writers in Ending Sexual Exploitation and Harm:

A Toolkit and Resource Guide



The Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) addresses the culture, institutions, and individuals that perpetrate, profit from, or support sexual exploitation. Our work includes prevention, policy reform, community engagement, and legal services. CAASE envisions a community free from all forms of sexual exploitation, including sexual assault and the commercial sex trade.

The Voices and Faces Project is an award-winning documentary initiative created to bring the names, faces and stories of survivors of sexual violence and trafficking to the attention of the public. Through its lobbying and speakers bureau, websites (voicesandfaces.org and counterquo.org), sexual violence survivor story archive, and a series of documentaries and creative projects— including "The Stories We Tell," the country's first creative writing workshop for survivors of sexual and domestic violence and trafficking— The Voices and Faces Project seeks to change minds, hearts, and public policies on sexual violence and exploitation.

The Neighborhood Writing Alliance (NWA) provokes dialogue, builds community, and promotes change by creating opportunities for adults in Chicago's underserved neighborhoods to write, publish, and perform works about their lives. These works are published in the award-winning *Journal of Ordinary Thought*. NWA envisions a society where adults connect through creative communities in which writing, discussing, and publishing personal narrative leads to civic engagement, neighborhood vitality, and social transformation.

Engaging Writers in Ending Sexual Exploitation and Harm is a resource created by the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation in collaboration with the Neighborhood Writing Alliance and The Voices and Faces Project. The toolkit is for individuals who are interested in writing on the issues of human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and other forms of sexual violence. This toolkit provides background information on issues surrounding sexual exploitation and sexual assault. These crimes involve perpetrators exploiting power—often deeply rooted in gender inequality—over their victims.

Individuals in the sex trade frequently experience severe physical, sexual, and emotional harm. Throughout this toolkit, we often refer to women and girls as victims of the sex trade and sexual assault. However, men, boys, and transgendered individuals are also victims of sexual assault and exploitation, and almost all individuals in the sex trade experience harm and trauma. We ask you to acknowledge and remember their stories as well.

Survivors of sexual assault often experience anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is important that writers speak out about these human rights violations because written works can create change, and language impacts how we understand social injustice. We hope this kit will be a useful resource to equip you with the knowledge and tools needed to use writing as a tool for social change.

This toolkit includes the following resources:

- Basic information on human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and sexual assault
- Information on how to frame these issues when writing about them
- Guidelines and tips for blogging about these issues

Words that Create Change

According to the World Health Organization, at least one in every three women—up to one billion women worldwide—have experienced some form of gender-based violence. According to the Center for Disease Control, one in every six men will experience sexual violence in his lifetime. Language often becomes a tool for avoiding these painful realities. Thus, the abuse becomes “a family affair,” the near-epidemic rates of rape on college campuses and universities become a mere part of “campus life,” the local and global trafficking of women and girls become “the world’s oldest profession,” and rape during armed conflict becomes a part of the inevitable, expected “messiness of war.”

This toolkit was created to help you do something very different with language. It includes important information about sexual harm: what it is, why it is so damaging, and how it is having a profound impact on victims of sexual violence in Chicago and beyond. The information provided in these pages will give you an overview of the issues of sexual exploitation and sexual violence, reminding you that rape and sexual exploitation are human rights violations and social justice issues that need our attention, our action, and perhaps most importantly, our words.

When we write about the injustices we’ve lived, witnessed, or learned about, we become more than authors: we become witnesses to the often painful truths that our communities need to better understand (and too often choose to avoid). This toolkit can serve as a catalyst for activism within writers’ groups, and can also be used by classes or workshops focused on creating social change. We hope that it will represent the beginning of an ongoing engagement in the issues of sexual violence and exploitation. While this toolkit was created to provide information, we also hope that it can be a source of inspiration: a resource that propels you in the fight to create a more safe, just, and peaceful world.

By providing opportunities for dialogue, reflection, creation, and performance, The Voices and Faces Project and the Neighborhood Writing Alliance, together with the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, seek to contribute to a world where every voice has the chance to be heard. Your story matters because it is your own, and it is important to tell the stories of others. These stories can also be something more: a window into the worlds of other people’s experiences, and a reminder of all that is universal about the human experience.

Why I Want to Be a Writer

by Marisel Melendez

I have a story to tell.
I have lived a very complex life.
I have a voice inside waiting to tell this story.

Young and old will enjoy it.
New things have happened since.
Old things are lingering in my mind.

Sexual assault...
Pregnancies...
Bruises...

I have cried in silence...
I have screamed in fear...
I have managed.

I have survived so many things
That if only one person hears my
Story and survives, it’s a blessing from above.

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issue of the Journal of Ordinary Thought*

ACTIVIST SPOTLIGHT: Julian Sher,
author of *Somebody's Daughter:
The Hidden Story of America's
Prostituted Children and the Battle
to Save Them*



Excerpt taken from the book's website

They are America's forgotten children: the hundreds of thousands of child prostitutes who walk the "tracks"—the Las Vegas Strip, the casinos of Atlantic City, the truck stops on interstates and the street corners of our cities. Most people wrongly believe sex trafficking involves young women from foreign lands but the vast majority of teens caught in the sex trade are American girls— the runaways and the throwaways few people care about. They become victims of ruthless pimps whose lifestyle is often glorified in the media and in the rap music scene.

From the streets of Dallas where the police have set up a pioneering High Risk Victims Unit to the glittering casinos of Las Vegas and Atlantic City where the FBI's "Innocence Lost" investigators try to dismantle major pimping criminal enterprises, *Somebody's Daughter* takes you behind the scenes to expose one of America's most under-reported crimes: the trafficking of American girls on American streets.

Julian Sher is an award-winning investigative journalist in print, on the radio, on TV, and on the internet. Publishers Weekly called *Somebody's Daughter* "a thorough, deeply affecting study... [that] strikes a rare balance between revealing trauma and hope."

As an investigative journalist, Sher is interested in "disturbing issues that raise troubling questions" that other people are ignoring. He believes the job of any good journalist is to point out what he calls the "dark mirror" of society. His book *Somebody's Daughter* highlights the realities of child prostitution in the United States. While most people associate child prostitution with international children being trafficked into the United States, Sher discovered and revealed that many of these young girls are American, born and raised on our soil.

Writing the book was not easy for Sher; he faced several barriers and ethical dilemmas. Relevant individuals and organizations—local law enforcement, FBI, community groups, and young girls in the sex trade or survivors of the sex trade—were reluctant to speak with Sher about the issue. He had to first build trust with these individuals and groups. Once trust was established, Sher found that individuals and organizations opened up about their experiences.

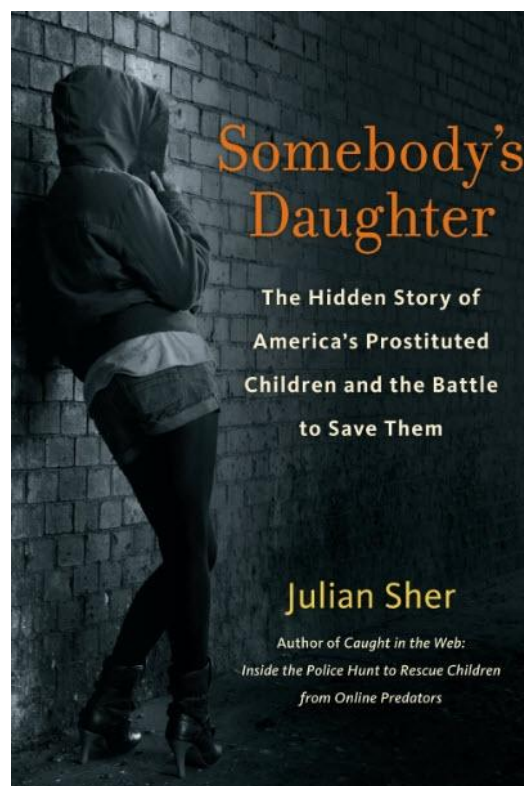
The young girls that Sher spoke with often began by speaking in the third person, as if prostitution was something that had happened to someone else. But over time, the girls transitioned to telling their stories in the first person.

Sher wanted to tell the girls' stories accurately, honestly, and genuinely. He did not make up any details or aspects of the book. He did, however, change the names of the young girls to avoid victimizing them further. The only names he did not change were those of young girls who had been murdered while in the commercial sex industry. Sher also added that, as an author, "when talking about really ugly, disturbing things, you have to decide how far you are going to go when describing the act." For example, Sher describes a detailed rape scene in the book. These details were taken directly from the survivor's court testimony. Sher felt that because the survivor disclosed these details in court, it was also important that he accurately portray them in his book, which he did with her permission. This survivor has since read the book and told Sher she was very moved by how he portrayed her traumatic experience.

Sher has been to Afghanistan to report on the Taliban, he has reported on the Iraq War, and he has been to some of the poorest villages in Africa, but this story of child prostitution impacted him because it is happening in his own backyard. It's happening in Chicago, New York, Dallas, and even rural America; it's not just an international problem. He was shocked at how widespread the issue is, stating the issue is "in hiding, but once you start to look, it is not hard to see." He was also struck by a new movement of churches, community groups, adolescents, and college students joining the fight against human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

When asked what advice he would give to people who would like to write about sex trafficking, he encouraged everyone to write. He encourages survivors of the sex trade to write and tell their own stories. Rather than reinforcing images of a glamorized sex industry often portrayed on television, in the movies, and in the media, Sher spoke about dismantling the "pimp culture" that we often see and hear about.

Sher also cautioned that writers should avoid writing about prostituted girls as hopeless or helpless victims with no control over their own lives. Interviewers of survivors should avoid judgmental language, a tip that law enforcement professionals emphasized to Sher when he was talking to young girls about their experiences. In his own work, Sher believed it was extremely important to be honest about the fear and trauma the girls experienced while also portraying the resilience and strength they exhibited during and after their experiences in the sex trade.



MODERN-DAY SLAVERY

Human trafficking, also known as modern day slavery, is pervasive nationally and internationally. There are more people enslaved today than at the peak of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

In the United States, a person is a victim of sex trafficking if s/he is being exploited to engage in commercial sex. A person is a victim of a severe form of sex trafficking if:

S/he is being forced, coerced, or tricked to either work or engage in sex for money, and s/he would experience serious harm if s/he tried to leave situation.

OR

S/he is under 18 and is having sex for money. (It isn't necessary to prove force or coercion for minors: the law recognizes that minors in prostitution are victims of crime.)

While transportation or movement can be involved in human trafficking, trafficking is simply forced or coerced labor; it doesn't require transportation or movement across borders.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. . . Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person.

United Nations, Articles 1 & 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

END THE DEMAND

Although ample research informs us that the customers ("johns"), pimps, and traffickers are fueling the sex trade and abusing women and girls, the criminal justice and legal systems continue to target and punish the victims. This

one-sided focus fails to address the root cause of prostitution: the demand.

As long as demand exists, more vulnerable women and children will be forced, coerced, and manipulated to meet the demand. The equation is simple; eliminate demand, eliminate commercial sexual exploitation.

In Illinois, the rate of prostituted individuals being arrested for felony prostitution has increased over 1000 percent since 1995¹. This makes it difficult for women to escape prostitution and pursue rehabilitation due to the fact that an arrest record makes it much more difficult to secure a job or home. Johns frequently receive lesser punishment such as car impoundment, fines, and municipal violations.

Individuals involved in the sex trade need a variety of social services and other resources to exit the sex trade safely. Unfortunately, instead of viewing these individuals as victims in need of assistance, society tends to label them as criminals.

CAASE and The Voices and Faces Project work on the End Demand Illinois campaign, which is reforming state law to hold pimps, johns and traffickers accountable while proposing support and services for survivors. Learn more about these efforts and stories related to demand at www.enddemandillinois.org

¹ Illinois Department of Corrections, *Statistical Presentation 2004* (Springfield, Ill., 2005), 38.

FRAMING THE ISSUE

When writing about human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and sexual harm, it is important to write both effectively and responsibly. Your word choices will set the tone of what you are writing and what you are trying to portray to your audience.

Using “women in prostitution” and “prostituted women” emphasizes that prostitution is not their primary identity. Avoiding using the word “prostitute” and other derogatory synonyms helps to challenge readers’ conceptions about prostitution. Additionally, not using the term “sex work” makes it clear that this sexually exploitative industry is not normal labor. Your writing should disrupt inaccurate implications and explain how the use of these terms only normalizes the sex trade and ignores the severe forms of violence its victims face.

Women and girls are usually the topic of discussion and/or writing regarding prostitution, but we must not ignore the root cause of sexual exploitation: the pimps, traffickers, and johns who make up the demand side of the commercial sex trade.

To end sexual exploitation, men must stand up against sexual harm and become allies in the fight to eliminate sexual violence from our communities. This is not a women’s issue, but an issue that everyone has a stake in. Human trafficking and sexual exploitation affect the community as a whole.

Understanding more about the urgent conditions women and girls in prostitution struggle against will prepare you to identify and effectively use appropriate language to describe people and events of the sex trade.

BLOGGING ON THE ISSUE

Blogging is a great way to use your writing to reach a large audience, spark dialogue, and share information and resources. Whether you decide to start your own blog or submit your writing to existing blogs, the following tips will help you be clear, concise, and focused.

Tumblr, WordPress, and Blogger are three of the most commonly used free blogging websites. You can link your blog to social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter.

Tips on blogging:

- If you are posting to a blog that is not your own, familiarize yourself with the blog’s atmosphere. Pay attention to content, comments, and the mission or main purpose of the blog.
- Include relevant photographs but avoid inaccurate images of women in short skirts or glamorous situations. Think instead about creative ways to show the demand side of the trade—the buyers who are usually left invisible.
- Link to high-quality news articles, organizations, and websites.
- If your post is more than 1,000 words, consider breaking it into two or three posts.
- Edit your piece before posting. Share your writing with another person to make sure your message is strong and information is clear.
- Respond to comments made on your post to keep the dialogue going.

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The average age of entry into prostitution is **12–14 years old**.² The overwhelming majority of individuals engaged in prostitution have a history of physical or sexual abuse, with estimates ranging from 65% to 95%.³

Being abused teaches victims to expect and accept abuse. It also teaches young people how to disassociate their bodies from their minds. *Being able to dissociate is necessary to survive the trauma experienced while in prostitution.*

Commercial sexual exploiters in the United States, commonly referred to as pimps, target particularly vulnerable youth, such as runaway and homeless adolescents. Pimps are constantly searching for younger victims, who often bring higher profits. One out of every three teens on the street will be lured toward prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home.⁴

Pimps understand the circumstances and tactics necessary to compel an individual into the sex trade, and they seek out the most vulnerable individuals to physically coerce or emotionally manipulate through seduction, false promises, verbal or physical abuse, and threats of harm to the victim or the victim's family.⁵

² U.S. Department of Justice. (2007). *Domestic Sex Trafficking of Minors*. Washington, DC.

³ M. Farley et al., "Prostitution and Trafficking in Nine Countries: An Update on Violence and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder" in M. Farley, ed., *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress* (New York: Haworth, 2003), 33-74.

⁴ National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, www.missingkids.com.

⁵ J. Raphael and J. Ashley, *Domestic Sex Trafficking of Chicago Women and Girls* (Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, DePaul University College of Law, 2003).

WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION

Research conducted in Chicago and nationwide reveals that a substantial percentage of women in prostitution are homeless or survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, and they began working in the sex trade at a very young age.

When we think of a woman in prostitution compared to a victim of sex trafficking, different images often come to mind. We tend to blame women in prostitution for their involvement in the sex trade, but view victims of sex trafficking as innocent. This is a false dichotomy that you can challenge in your writing by showing the overlap between prostitution and sex trafficking.

A study of 222 women in the sex trade in Chicago found that 44% to 50% of these women give the money they make in prostitution to someone else, and 79% of those women believe they would be harmed if they stopped.⁶

According to an FBI estimate, a woman's average life expectancy is only seven years after the date of entry into prostitution. Girls and women in the sex industry also have a mortality rate 40 times higher than the national average.⁷

While awareness is rising about children being exploited in the sex trade, it's important to also remember into the experiences of adults who are exploited in prostitution. Challenge commonly held ideas that women are in prostitution by choice, when in fact they may have no other choices.

⁶ Raphael, J. & Shapiro, D.L. (2002). *Sister speak out: The lives and needs of prostituted women in Chicago*. Center for Impact Research.

⁷ Melissa Farley, *The Prostitution Fact Sheet*, prostitutionresearch.com.

CREATIVE WRITING PROMPTS

These writing prompts may be helpful to get you started in your writing, whether it's for your own personal use or for a blog, newspaper, or class.

Sample writing prompts:

- What does a world without sexual exploitation and human trafficking look like?
- Write about a moment in your life when you felt most free. What was it about that event/activity/time that gave you such a sense of freedom? What were you free from and what were you free to do?
- Do you believe that freedom is given to you by others or made by you?

Tips for hosting your own writing workshop:

- Set community guidelines at the beginning of the workshop
- Create guidelines for giving and receiving feedback (Check out *Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process*)
- Allow enough time for both writing and discussion
- Encourage writers to move their pens without judging their writing—editing can come later
- Give writers the option to write about whatever they want if the prompt does not resonate with them
- Tell writers that they will have the opportunity to share, but can choose not to share

WRITING WORKSHOPS

For more information about community writing workshops, check out:

Neighborhood Writing Alliance
www.jot.org
773-684-2742

Guild Complex
www.guildcomplex.org
877-394-5061

Young Chicago Authors
www.youngchicagoauthors.com
773-486-4331

Read/Write Library
www.readwritelibrary.org
773-336-2516

Rape Victim Advocates
www.rapevictimadvocates.org
312-443-9603

The Voices and Faces Project Testimonial Writing Workshop for Survivors
testimonial@voicesandfaces.org
www.voicesandfaces.org

Vox Ferus
voxferus@gmail.com
(there is a small fee for Vox Ferus workshops)

Maybe this is the day

by Laura Ng, Founder of Traffick Free

(Meant for the stage)

STAGE: pair of women's shoes in the corner where exit will be. Long table with makeup and hair products strewn about. Girl, sitting at stool behind the table facing audience.

[definitive, sitting at table as if staring at self in the mirror] This is it.

I can't do this anymore. Not one more day. Not one more hand on me. Not one more whisper saying "baby it's okay." Not one more husky voice telling me how much I want it or how good I am.

I am so tired. They took the soul I had a long time ago. I've been doing this for so long that...I don't need to think about it anymore. I wish I cared, but I'm too tired. But they will not hurt me anymore.

This is it.

[dreaming, pacing] Maybe I'll go back to my momma's house. I wonder what she's cooking for dinner tonight. I wonder if Stevie is still wanting to play for the White Sox. He was always thinking he'd make the big leagues, but momma had such a hard time keeping him out of trouble. Always looking at girls, doing things to get their attention. I hope Stevie is doing alright and taking care of momma. Daddy never did. Sometimes I wonder if I really remember daddy or if the memories are from the pictures I looked at over and over again, wishing he was back. I wonder if daddy had never left, whether we would have been okay. Whether I would have been different.

[reminiscing] I miss school. I never thought I'd say that! I'm sure my teachers wouldn't believe it either. I was so excited to get that diploma after I finished the 8th grade. Wonder what it would have been like to finish high school. To go to football games, prom, to be normal...and safe. Why was I trying to get out of there so bad? I don't have a degree, probably never will because there are no second chances in life. So what other job can I get now? Maybe this was all I was made for. All I was made to be good at.

[longing, quiet] He was so sweet when we met. And I was so lost. No boy had ever looked at me like that before. And he seemed like such a man. A car that actually had all its original parts – so shiny so clean. He took me places and paid for everything. Before I knew it, I was his and he was mine... I was telling my family good-bye. I knew what I was doing. Until one day we were together and the money seemed to disappear. So I helped out. The only way I could help out with the only thing I knew to do. And he said he loved me. And he was so proud of me. Then I had to help out again. And again. *[mourning, fearful, knees drop to the ground]* And again. And then he hit me. It was for my own good. I needed to learn— how to stay out later to make back the money that some john jipped me on earlier. How to turn more and more humiliating tricks to make them men roll their eyes so far to the back of their heads they can't see how much I take outta their wallets. I learned how to get other girls to "help out" so that he doesn't hit me as much if he's hittin' them.

[definitive] He takes care of me. And I've always been his number one. He's the only one who ever paid me any attention and said he loved me. And I love him. I love him I love him I love him.

[seemingly confident] So I gotta take care of him. Cuz he takes care of me. He was there. He was there when no one else was there so I'll take care of him.

[whisper, walking towards shoes] Maybe tomorrow... *[grab shoes and exit stage]*

SEXUAL ASSAULT: THE REALITY

One-in-three girls and one-in-six boys will be victims of sexual assault/abuse before the age of 18 years old. Forty-four percent of victims are under the age of 18. Eighty percent are under the age of 30.⁸

Sixty percent of sexual assaults are not reported to the police, and 15 of 16 rapists will never spend a day in jail.

Sexual assault is a crime of violence. Perpetrators seek to dominate, humiliate, and punish their victims.

What someone is wearing or how someone is acting does not mean that they are asking for sex or to be assaulted. Nothing a victim does (or does not do) causes or justifies a brutal crime like sexual assault.

Assailants often choose victims who seem most vulnerable: the elderly, children who are physically or emotionally disabled, and substance abusers.

Men are also attacked. Most assaults that involve a male victim are gang rapes.

ACQUAINTANCE SEXUAL ASSAULT

Seventy-seven percent of completed rapes are committed by someone the victim knows. A woman is four times more likely to be sexually assaulted by an acquaintance than by a stranger.⁹

Perpetrators often overpower their victims with the threat of violence or with actual violence. Especially in cases of acquaintance rape or incest, an assailant often uses the victim's trust in him to isolate her.

Acquaintance rape is rarely reported to the police. Less than 2% of acquaintance rape victims reported the assault, whereas 21% of women raped by a stranger reported the crime.¹⁰ When victims do report, they are often not believed and have a hard time receiving adequate services.

Victims of acquaintance rape often have to face their perpetrator, which may cause the victim distress, fear, and humiliation. Trauma experienced after acquaintance rape is no less severe than trauma experienced after being sexually assaulted by a stranger.

⁸ <http://www.rainn.org/statistics>

⁹ National Center for Victims of Crime.
<http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbName=DocumentViewer&DocumentID=32306>

¹⁰ Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 2002.

FRAMING THE ISSUE

When writing about sexual assault, the writer should always avoid victim-blaming language or commentary. Sexual assault is an act committed by someone against someone else. It does not matter what the victim was wearing, what s/he had to drink, or where s/he was: the victim did not deserve nor ask to be sexually assaulted.

Sexual assault is not a crime of passion or lust; it is a crime deeply embedded in power and dominance on behalf of the perpetrator. Framing sexual assault as a crime of passion makes the problem a private one rather than a public one.

Sexual violence is not a women's issue; it is an epidemic that affects all members of the community. Men are especially important because not all men are rapists, but the majority of rapists are men. We must mobilize men to stand up against violence against women.

When writing about this issue, instead of demonizing the perpetrator, address the culture that normalizes and tolerates sexual violence. We live in a rape culture based on patriarchy and oppression. This culture infiltrates the media we absorb, and our preconceived notions must be disrupted in order to address sexual violence.

Examining the root cause of sexual violence—gender inequality—is a crucial first step in sexual violence prevention. Writing about sexual violence in a way that addresses gender inequalities is an important way to promote understanding and prevention.

Remember that most of the time, sexual assault is perpetrated by an acquaintance of the victim. Therefore, stranger rape should not be the focus of all writing about sexual assault. It is important to illustrate an honest and accurate representation of the issue.

HOW WRITING CAN BE EMPOWERING FOR SURVIVORS

Telling one's story should be a survivor's choice. No survivor should ever be forced to tell his or her story.

Many sexual assault survivors find it therapeutic to write about their story. When stories are shared, rape survivors can learn from each other's experiences and wisdom.

Sexual violence is an issue that needs be talked about, and writing is an extremely useful and influential outlet to bring the issue to the public's attention.

When a person is sexually assaulted, s/he is stripped of dignity, confidence, and autonomy. The perpetrator silences his or her victim. Writing about sexual violence can give a victim his or her voice and power back.

We see the brightness of a
new page where everything
yet can happen.
— *Rainer Maria Rilke*

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY AND RESPONSIBLY INTERVIEW A SURVIVOR OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OR SEXUAL ASSAULT

Writers may choose to interview a survivor of sexual exploitation or sexual assault to tell their story. It is important to do this in an effective and responsible manner and to gather facts and details to portray an accurate and honest story on behalf of the survivor. Below are some guidelines and tips.

- Always ask permission to write about a survivor's story and inform the survivor how you will be publishing your writing. Drafting a contract that lays out these agreements may be beneficial.
- Determine what the survivor's comfort level is with using real information such as the survivor's name, the perpetrator's name, location, etc. If requested, replace names with pseudonyms. Note this as a disclaimer in the beginning of your writing.
- The more you know about the realities of the commercial sex trade and its intersections with domestic violence, sexual assault, racism, and poverty, the greater the chances that you will be able to build a trusting relationship with the survivor and portray their story accurately and powerfully.
- Meet the survivor in a quiet, private area without undue distraction, and set aside the time necessary to develop rapport. Be discreet if the meeting place is in public.
- Survivors of both sexual assault and commercial sexual exploitation experience psychological trauma, physical trauma, and emotional trauma. While interviewing a survivor, s/he will be recounting his or her traumatic experiences, which could lead to triggering traumatic symptoms such as anxiety, a panic attack, or dissociation. You should not only prepare yourself for this, but you should also begin your interview by saying that the survivor can stop at any time if s/he needs a break. The interviewee can also choose to not answer any questions you ask. Be alert to symptoms of psychological distress during the interview and pause when you feel necessary. Have a plan in place if the survivor experiences traumatic symptoms, and ask the survivor if s/he has a plan as well.
- Offer to allow the survivor to transcribe his or her traumatic experiences instead of verbally relaying them to you.
- Ask questions in a supportive, nonjudgmental way, and affirm the survivor's responses in a way that demonstrates understanding and compassion. Be in tune with your own body language, and avoid body language that may come across as judgmental or express pity or disgust.
- Be careful not to imply in your comments or questions that the survivor was responsible for his or her exploitation or sexual assault.
- Be sensitive to issues of gender if you are a male and the survivor you are interviewing is a female or vice versa.
- Ask open-ended questions that allow the survivor to say as much or as little as s/he wants.

- Embrace silence. Do not push the survivor to answer your questions immediately, and do not assume silence means he or she does not want to answer the question. Let yourself be silent, too.
- Validate the survivor's feelings and experiences.
- At the end of the interview, thank the survivor for their participation and allow him or her to ask you any follow-up questions regarding your writing.
- If you are going to follow up with him or her after the interview via email or telephone, establish what you can and cannot say in your communication. Someone else may read his or her emails or answer the phone and they may be the perpetrator or not know about the sexual assault or exploitation.

THANK YOU

Thank you for using our toolkit. We hope that you found the resource helpful. Survivors, your story matters because it is your own. Community members who want to join the movement against sexual violence, your words can create change. Your stories can empower other people to tell their stories and will serve as a reminder that these injustices are occurring not only overseas but in our very own backyards. CAASE is always available to answer any questions, suggestions, or concerns that you may have while reading and working with this toolkit. Please do not hesitate to contact us at outreach@caase.org.

We also encourage you to look at the supplemental information provided in addition to this toolkit. These materials include:

- General guidelines for writing a media response
- Sample responses to sexual violence in the media
- Relevant Blogs
- Chicago-based organizations: Direct service/outreach
- Chicago-based organizations: Advocacy
- Must-read Books
- Must-see Films
- Take Action

We would greatly appreciate feedback regarding your experience with this toolkit. You can fill out a brief survey online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/W5NZRXM>.