

Victims of Leslie White speak out

Jun 24

Leslie White,

This letter is for you, from all of us known and unknown who you have abused through your terrible misuse of assumed power. Please know that we in this letter are only a small representation of the lives you have personally damaged.

You have molested us, raped us, had inappropriate sexual conversations with us, touched us inappropriately, hugged and kissed us forcibly, against our will, asked us inappropriate questions, you have demeaned, threatened, groomed us, made us trust you, coerced and forced us to be a part of things we didn't ask for and that we didn't want to be a part of in any way, shape or form.

You have robbed us of much, taken our power and silenced our voices but we are here to say no more, enough!

No longer do we fear you, no longer will we be silent, lest we also would be amongst those who have in their silence and inaction enable you to continue to abuse and ruin the lives of precious souls.

We are taking back our power.

Now it is our turn to do the asking.

We request that you would acknowledge your abuse of us all and that you would permanently remove yourself from all meetings and gatherings effective immediately. This is in accordance with how the scriptures tell us that evil doers like yourself should be handled.

After all that you have taken from us we are not asking much.

You are a predator, a violator, you are not safe to be around women and children. This is mercy for your soul to remove you from temptations which you so obviously cannot refuse.

JoNell McDaniel: Leslie was so overpowering and flew so deeply under the radar. I was so afraid of him.

Leslie loved to visit me alone at my house and in his secluded little cabin on the convention grounds in Elizabeth.

He asked me to buy him a couple of ties, because his were getting worn.

Of course, he wanted me to deliver those to the cabin during convention.

He was on such a power trip.

He makes me sick

Anonymous: When I was in my 30's Leslie's abuse was on going over a period of several years. Leslie would come through and visit alone on his way to oversee meetings in Tennessee. I experienced inappropriate touching and sexually explicit comments and conversations. His abuse had such a physical, emotional and mental affect on me and made me so ill that for quite some time I couldn't even care for myself.

I reported and shared my handwritten account with the sheriff's dept in 2012

Kim: Leslie abused me in my 40s. A meeting took place sometime around 2000/2002 with Leslie, Marlon Halbakken Marge Major, along with my grandma Maxine Felton. I begged that Leslie would step down from the work as I felt he wouldn't stop his behaviour and it would only get worse. Leslie's abuse of me included unwelcome visits to a lady alone in her home. Inappropriate sexual conversations, Inappropriate touching, forced kissing. Leslie stole my soul and I hate that.

I reported to sheriffs dept in 2012 **Laura Jelinek van Dijken:** I was around 22 years old and had been in the work for about 2 years and 3 months when I was raped by Leslie White at Elizabeth preps in Colorado in 2003.

Leslie said he would do a walk through of the area where I'd been working that day.

He raped me up in the nursery, told me to clean up the mess and I was threatened among other things he said that I would be put out of the work and out of meetings if I ever spoke up and that no one would believe me, that they would believe him because of who he was.

I still remember the sound of that door shutting.

I shoved the trauma under to survive and went on with my life and never said a word. I was called to go in the work and I didn't want to have to leave and I definitely didn't want to be told I couldn't go to meetings.

Plus Leslie was my overseer, the one making the plans for my life. Who was I supposed to turn to? So I just pretended everything was fine and I believed it was...until it wasn't.

In 2011 I returned from working in Finland/ Scandinavia. I was not feeling well at all. I hadn't really been sleeping for quite some time because it didn't feel safe. By that time I was very sick and felt like my body was shutting down. It felt like it was saying "You're not taking care of me so I'm not working for you anymore.

I went to York convention that year and found out shortly beforehand that Leslie was supposed to be there. He cornered me at some point in the dining shed and asked me if I was still keeping silent. I said yes. I ended up speaking in the same meeting as him and felt so sick.

In 2012 I was put in touch with a professional trauma counselor who was a huge part of what essentially helped save my life. I was diagnosed with complex PTSD and hyper vigilance. I was so busy throwing myself into taking care of others so I wouldn't have to feel or deal with my own pain but I could hardly function. I remember having thoughts while driving the road and thinking how nice it would be to be hit by a truck and just have all the pain ended and over with.

I eventually disclosed the rape to my counselor and in time he helped me tell my sister who was my co-worker at the time.

In April of 2012 I finally got to the place of desperation where I could no longer remain silent about what Leslie did.

I knew that if I keep silent the abuse would continue.

I wrote to Lyle Schober, he called me, he let Ray Hoffman know and Ray was in touch with Leslie.

I had a meeting with Ray, Lyle, my sister, my 1st co worker and a friend who works in the legal department concerning sexual abuse in mid May.

Ray and Lyle said they couldn't make the decision for me but that they strongly encouraged me to report to the sheriff's department in Colorado and they said that it would be the leverage that would need to get Leslie out of the ministry.

I was told this was mercy for Leslie because maybe it would help him to realize what he'd done and take it seriously and that maybe it would be a chance for him to repent and make things right.

I didn't want to report to the sheriff's dept and relive the horror that this man had done to me but at the same time I desperately wanted Leslie's abuse of women stopped.

I reported to the sheriffs dept in May 2012. Ray informed Leslie that day that effective immediately he was no longer in the work.

During the course of the investigation I was told that many many reports had come in from all over the US.

The nature of these reports was anything from someone feeling uncomfortable around Leslie, unwanted sexual conversations or questions, grooming behaviour, visiting women alone, inappropriate touching forced kissing etc.

In spite of the countless reports that came in to the investigator it unfortunately never went court. The case went inactive last year after 10 years.

From all I've heard Leslie has continued his behaviour and because of Ray Hoffman's refusal to put him out of all meetings and Ray and other overseers refusal to write a letter and notify the church (the people) of Leslie's behaviour and lack of repentance his behaviour has been allowed to continued and his abuse of women and young girls has been enabled.

In 2012 Ray Hoffman looked me in the eye and promised and assured me that Leslie White would never be in the work again, yet in April of 2023, 11 years later, it was discovered that Ray himself was letting Leslie speak in gospel meetings. When asked why, Ray answered; "Maybe not the wisest choice".

I cannot help but feel righteous anger that Leslie wasn't removed from the work long ago. Barry Barkley and Ray Hoffman are partially responsible for all those who were abused after the very first time they heard of his behaviour and essentially did nothing. A friend in Colorado told me in 2012 that her Aunt had had problems with him in Georgia 50 years before this. Your knowledge of Leslie's abuse has never been 1 isolated occasion that you could write off as a simple innocent lack of judgement.

Anonymous:

I want to talk about shame.

SHAME. It's what I've been cloaked in for such a long time. It's what I felt at convention one year when I was 12/13 when a brother worker who was very well respected by everyone sexually assaulted me.

SHAME. It's what I felt that same convention when I took too many of my anti-anxiety meds and started having issues breathing.

SHAME. It's what I felt when the ambulance had to come get me from the convention grounds.

SHAME. It's what I felt when my parents had to come pick me up after getting my stomach pumped.

SHAME. It's what I felt when that same brother worker wrote a letter to my parents telling them that due to my 'suicide attempt' I was no longer welcome on those convention grounds.

SHAME. Red hot. Creeping up my face. I felt it in my bones. I tried years to bury it. I used drugs, alcohol, I cut myself, I DID try to commit suicide. More than once.

SHAME led to self hatred led to very abusive relationships and a self destructive lifestyle that I'm lucky I survived from at all.

SHAME is what I talked about today in therapy. Years of it rolled down my face as I said that brother workers name.

SHAME is what HE should feel, having hurt many others besides me.

I put my shame back on him, I put my shame on the fact he's still (to my knowledge less than a month ago) ACTIVELY participating in meetings.

He should feel every ounce of his survivors shame, every bit of our fear, our sadness our collective pain. He did MUCH WORSE to others than he did to me.

He should be ostracized, cast out.

He should be IN PRISON for the acts he's committed.

But he isn't. He's free.

And finally after years and years, I'm free too.

SHAME: I put it all back on you, Leslie White.

Tava Z: I was 9 years old when Leslie molested me in my house. The abuse was on going.

Reported to PI Liles 2023.

Anonymous: I've been asked to share a bit about my experiences with Leslie White, both as a teenager and again as a young married woman. I was probably 15-16 when he appeared (unexpectedly) at a gathering of young people in our home. He was "holding court" with all the young girls clinging to his every word. I was very uncomfortable with the whole situation. When it was time for him to leave, he was hugging the women/girls and shaking hands with the men. When he got to me, I awkwardly extended my hand to shake and he ignored that and pulled me into a hug that was a very inappropriate "full frontal" hug. I quickly extricated myself and pushed away from him. I thought I had, through my body language, made my opinion of him crystal clear.

Several years later, when I moved to the state where he was the overseer, I heard stories from the other married ladies of LW showing up, alone and uninvited, to their homes when their husbands would be gone working. I thought, "he'd never do that to me, he knows I don't like him at all." I was quite surprised when he showed up, not once, not twice, but three different times. Each time, he was alone, uninvited, and my husband was gone. The first time, I ignored the bell because I had been warned he just stopped down the street and was in the neighborhood. (Imagine that, the professing ladies playing a game of telephone to warn one another that the overseer was making his rounds, alone, to see the married ladies!?) The second time I told him that I believed in the verse that said abstain from even the appearance of evil so he wouldn't be coming into my house when I was there alone. The third time, he called through the door and said that he just needed to use the telephone. Again, I refused him entry while I was there alone and told him there was a pay phone at the gas station down the road.

In all of these interactions, I felt like he was testing my response to see what he could get by with. I was never raised to worship workers and was always told by my parents that if something feels wrong, trust your gut. I am very thankful for that. I am also thankful for the more experienced, slightly older married ladies in my town who had warned several of us that were newly married and quite young that this may happen. Their courage to speak up gave us the courage to say no when he showed up uninvited. While these things were not criminal, they were definitely inappropriate and not the behavior of a true servant of God.

Anonymous: I was a teenager when Leslie was around my sister and I a lot. He would hug us and was very touchy feely with us and it made us so uncomfortable.

Anonymous: At convention in August, 2008, Leslie White spoke to me briefly in the dining tent about returning to the meetings, and having a part again, following my divorce.

He mentioned that he would be in touch to find a time to have that conversation.

In January, 2009, Leslie was having gospel meetings in the area, and contacted me to follow through on his earlier promise to have a conversation about meetings.

Leslie invited me to join him and his

companion for dinner with the purpose of providing me with an opportunity to return to meetings, have a part, following my divorce several years earlier.

Leslie asked me numerous times to meet at my home for dinner, to which I replied that I did not feel comfortable with two men in my home, alone. We agreed to meet at a restaurant for dinner, however, only Leslie attended and made an excuse as to why his companion did not attend.

Following conversation about family and life, with dinner finished, Leslie stated that he wasn't finished with our meeting. I suggested that we could go to a coffee shop, to which he stated that he didn't want more coffee.

He suggested that we go to my house; I denied that request repeatedly, stating that it was inappropriate, and he should not consider that an option.

Leslie continued to try to break me down to

convince me to allow him to come to my home, which included statements that he didn't care if things weren't in order, or that he wouldn't go upstairs. After offering several public locations to continue the

meeting, Leslie finally agreed to meet at a large public mall, in view of others. At this location, the conversation turned to a far more personal subject involving my relationship with my ex-husband,

specifically my sexual relationship with my ex-husband.

For reference, here are some of the questions he asked me:

1. Did you ever have pleasure with your husband?
2. How often did the two of you have sex?
3. Could my husband get an erection?
4. Did he ejaculate?
5. What did I do to excite him?
6. Did I get him to masturbate?
7. Did he think your body was attractive?
8. Did he look at other women?
9. In the times you did have sex, was he able to get you wet?
10. "Any man with one red blood cell would have sex with you." Statement by LW
11. Leslie said he would have sex with me.
12. Leslie said he would even marry me if he were younger.
13. Leslie said I was an absolutely beautiful woman with a beautiful body.
14. Leslie told me that he loved me 4 or 5 times during the evening conversation.

Following this very uncomfortable conversation, I felt extremely violated by someone I had been taught to trust and respect.

I reached out to friends from meeting that I knew I could trust with this sensitive

information. Without hesitation, they began to advocate for me and initiated contact with Barry Barkley.

Barry flew from the East Coast to attend a meeting at this couples' home, where Leslie, Barry, the couple, myself, and an Elder from the area spent 3 hours in a conversation about the incident. Leslie denied everything that I mentioned he had said to me that evening.

However, during a pause in conversation, he blurted out, "I did ask you about orgasm." "Did I say that right?" This was the moment his entire denial would be seen as a lie, when he convicted himself.

Over the course of many months, emails were exchanged with workers who had been put in charge of handling this situation by covering his behavior as "he's just a human, and we all make mistakes," calling me "a troubled woman," asking for additional time to see if there was a pattern to Leslie's behavior or if it was a one-time occurrence.

At my request for outside intervention, a mediation specialist heard both parties separately, and then together for a final meeting, in August 2010.

At that final meeting, Leslie denied he'd ever mentioned any of the above-mentioned statements, including the orgasm comment. The mediation specialist gave a dire warning that unless a system was put into place where people could feel free from the fear of retaliation or disbelief by coming forward in

abusive experiences, that this behavior would continue amongst the ministry, and it would not stand the test of time.

He asked that the worker, Jim Price, who was acting as witness for the final meeting, agree to such a system, to which he refused by stating that those decisions would need to come from Barry Barkley.

The mediation specialist suggested Ministry Safe as a means that all workers/ministers should take, to better understand their roles, and safekeeping as they stayed in other's homes.

Barry Barkley continued to remain in touch with me through email, often discussing his travels and time with various workers and friends, never making mention of the incident with Leslie and how it was

progressing.

It is now 2023, and in light of all that is happening in the Truth, I felt compelled to include my experience, knowing that Leslie White was never held accountable for his behavior, but was allowed to continue in the Work, often meeting with other women alone, and traveling without a companion.

To all the workers who were involved in this situation, investigation, and mediation that chose to blame the victim while protecting the abuser, you are just as liable and responsible for promoting dishonesty,

immorality and illegal behaviors within the Truth.

A mother: In light of all that has been brought to the attention of workers and friends in the last few months, regarding CSA, SA, sexual harassment, and inappropriate behavior within the ministry, I felt it was necessary to share concerns that I felt with comments Leslie White made to me in regards to my then 13 year old daughter, at convention.

Leslie had just arrived in IN, and was getting acquainted with everyone between

meetings. I was in the meeting shed when he came up to me, and stated that he had met my youngest daughter, and she was "absolutely stunning," and the most beautiful young girl he'd ever met!

He went on with similar comments for a minute or so, I thanked him, and then moved on.

At the moment he said those things, a flash of concern ran through my mind, just for a split second, because it seemed so passionate and a little unexpected from a male worker. I reassured myself that my thought was entirely wrong, and actually felt guilty for even considering some concern, as we often heard people compliment our girls' appearance.

What I was unaware of was the fact that Leslie White made a practice of this behavior and conversation.

What seemed as an innocent compliment may have been nothing more, in this case, as I kept a close

eye on my children. But Momma Bear would've certainly stopped at nothing to protect my children had anything else seemed out of line.

Anonymous: I was abused by Leslie in Indiana around 2009. I was young, beautiful, and in a difficult relationship. Leslie thought he could prey on me by phone. He asked me sexually inappropriate questions. I hung up on him because of my disgust.

Anonymous: In 1987 Leslie was visiting at our home. I think he was overseer of Iowa at the time. I was 14 and he told me that he noticed I had slimmed down and that my figure was looking good. It was awkward. I can't remember if my mom overheard him say it, but I

did discuss it with her. Everyone thought Leslie was the greatest so everything he did or said was perfect.

In July/August of 1993 when I was 19 and about to turn 20, I had just given birth two weeks prior (pregnancy from being raped by a professing family member that I was protecting at the time), and I was visiting my parents when Leslie also came to their place after Brownstown, IL convention. Leslie lectured me at length that if I kept myself pure I could be forgiven and could be eligible for marriage. (I had always believed and heard growing up in meetings that the workers were so close to God they would say and do the right thing even if they didn't know the whole story.) The next morning my siblings and I all took a picture with Leslie and he had his arm wrapped around my waist for the picture and I was SO uncomfortable!!!

I believe Leslie was trying to be encouraging to me and he probably didn't realize how uncomfortable I was feeling in both instances. I don't believe he was coming on to me, but it was truly a lack of boundaries on his part.

I wish I could find that picture. I think it's somewhere at my parents and it would take quite a bit of time to locate it.

Cynthia Liles, PI: Information on the internet indicated White had finally been removed from the work in 2012 after years of complaints and the allegation of rape.

I noticed online there were a couple of

comments suggesting White was actually still in the work in Maine. I learned in late March or early April of 2023 that Ray Hoffman indeed had let him back in the work by letting him speak in gospel meetings.

This was confirmed with Ray in a phone

call.

Over the course of the last 3 months and even before the news of Dean Bruer broke I have received numerous messages and calls in regards to Leslie White.

A note to the administrators, workers elders and friends everywhere. We plead with you in the meekness and gentleness of Christ, do not ignore the crimes of this man and others any longer.

We beg you to deal with every perpetrators according to God's clear scripture and in and with God's Spirit.

The question needs to be asked;

WHY victims are so often not believed, not supported, not validated.

Why are there so many concessions for the violators, why do you protect them, cover up what they've done and dismiss and re-traumatize us?

Why do you allow them to continue abusing others?

We feel that it is because the violators and perpetrators are most often well known, someone in a place of power.

While the victims are most often unable to reveal their identity (they shouldn't have to) and so to you they remain faceless and nameless.

So let us introduce ourselves and just know that every victim falls into one or more of these categories. We are women, we are mothers, we are your sisters, daughters, nieces, we are your sister workers, we are grandmothers and from a even less heard from group sometimes we are men, boys, your sons, nephews, uncles, fathers and grandfather's.

Most of all we are God's children, we are souls and we matter too.

Whether we were children or adults when the abuse happened, whether our abuser or abuse was one time or many, whether we still go to meeting or not, we matter.

Please don't lend a deaf ear or turn a blind eye to us anymore.

Sincerely,

Just a very small representation of the many.