

## Mental Health

The trauma and the pain that I endured from that moment forward, not being able to sleep at night, having nightmares, flashbacks and anxiety attacks back to back, thinking to myself, does it stop with him? I remember the heartbreak of having to explain the situation to my mom and hearing the pain in her voice and seeing the pain in her eyes feeling like she failed me because the people she trusted me with me failed us. My Grandma, on my dad's side, owns a house in Paterson where I should have felt safe but in her basement lived a monster.

When I say monster, I don't mean the cute cartoon kind, that just wants a friend, who hides in closets. I'm referring to the ones that ruin lives. Well I know I felt mine being ruined. My heart shatters at every flashback reliving in my head. I remember vividly feeling the worst I could possibly ever feel, having to look at that couch and receiving the flashbacks in my head all over again. I remember being so scared to tell anyone, the more I held in the pain it kept coming, 4 years later I'm still scared for life as a young woman. I was confused, I needed someone to turn to, I needed someone to listen, but I was a baby, who could I have turned to? Would the world hate me if I spoke up? If I don't speak up will this continue to happen? Would my family hate me if I'm the reason he has to go back to jail?

Going back to that time, going back to the day in my mind had me feeling worse and worse like I was reliving it, almost like I was going through repetition compulsion. I felt a rush of sadness, anger, depression, loneliness and vulnerability. My heart was racing and beating faster with every breath I took, feeling like my heart would literally escape from my body, My stomach twisting, feeling queasy and me not wanting to eat because I was just in so much pain, distinguish and despair. Hands being shaky at every touch from even the slightest person. Face turned red, feeling like I was turning inside out, about to break out in sweats. Every glance I have at a beige couch I have to break down because any little thing triggered me to what once was. I felt like things would never get better and there was no hope for me. I cried myself to sleep time after time thinking when will this pain ever escape me and when.

I remember running out the front door in fear for my life or what would have happened next if I would've turned back around. It was about 6 to 7 in the morning, I ran up the steps, layed in my grandma's bed and looked at the ceiling thinking about what am I going to do next. Feeling like an owl in the night time.

July, 21st, 2018, I was only 12 years old when I went through the most traumatic experience I could ever imagine. It was a nice nice summer day. But after the incident that happened nothing was sunshines and pretty sunsets. July 21st 2018, I was molested by my step uncle.

While my dad was gone I had a male figure in my life , My uncle in law , he had just come home from jail and was living in the basement as I explained before . At one point I felt so blessed to have someone in my life and played the male role when my father couldn't fulfill that , not knowing the worst was yet to come . My dad is my hero , Unfortunately when this happened he was incarcerated and all I waited on was for him to save the day , you know how like they do in movies ?, take things back in time to where I didn't have to go through that , But I had to remember this isn't a movie , this real life and time is something that could never be given back .

I was pacing back in fourth in my mind thinking what my next step will be , I can't hold this in . We went to my grandparents explained everything and I remember bursting into tears not knowing what i'm going to do next , not knowing how i'm going to cope with everyday life , being so young and naive thinking how could someone think or want to do something like this especially to me , what I do did I deserve it ? if I saw him today i would ask him was it worth it ? and I remember hearing the cop sounds with the cops asking me to explain everything that happened in full , I never been a fan of the policemen , growing up as a afro latina woman , with my dad with my same last name in the system , I think to myself why would they want to help me , they don't know me , they don't care about me , I'll just go in the system with all the other misfortunes that happened in the world . But they did care , they did make me feel like I was safe talking to them .

Later that day my mom took me to the carnival to take my mind off things , I saw a couple of old friends and a friend knows when a friend is down , But I couldn't come to tell them that my heart was shattered into pieces and my life just flashed before my eyes , So I put a fake smile on , dying on the inside . I was a 12 year old girl suffering from depression , anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder . Having to enroll in my school therapy because I was so broken , so damaged , so destruct , not wanting anyone to get close to me and when they did I would burst into shivers or shakes . School therapy bringing me hope and some a little reassurance , that things get better with time . Also being able to know it doesn't rain forever . Having been told in the therapy room that you have to move with optimism because you are stronger than you think and that what you've been through doesn't define you , It doesn't make you who you are , only you can and you have so much more to you than the situation .

I am 16 years old now and I still remember the day like it was yesterday , But I have learned to cope with it better , If I could go back to my 12 year old self I would thank her for not giving up , tell her she is one of the strongest little girls I know , So many nights I cried , so many nights I thought it was my fault thinking to myself maybe If i dressed differently , If I wore long jeans instead of shorts in the summer , maybe than would he have left me alone ? . I would tell my younger self better days are to come , which they did , although we go through things in life , I learned not to let that define who we are , I hope no girl ever has to go through that , that's a pain

I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy , But what doesn't kill you makes you stronger and I came out stronger .