



Date: Tuesday, March 12, 2013

Subject: Concern for the Interview of the Sexual Abuse Victims of Larry Heyward

Attention: James Ethridge, Deputy of South Carolina Law Enforcement Division
jethridge@sled.sc.gov

Mr. Ethridge,

As a member of ReClaim Global, I feel I must bring to your attention a few situations that have concerned our organization regarding the treatment of sexual abuse victims by law officials in Hampton County. Our concern not only includes the Hampton County Sheriff's office, but now also you and your office, SLED.

Our uneasiness expands to other victims, in your area, who have written to us asking for help with their cases. The Hampton County community has shared with me how unfairly they feel they have been treated in this county by legal authorities, especially victims of sexual abuse. We have yet to meet with these individuals, so we will consider what they are saying for now as hearsay.

However, this letter will be about the victims we have interviewed.

ReClaim Global is a sexual victims advocacy group headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida. We were called into Hampton County because victims of sexual abuse, particularly those of Larry Heyward, felt they were not being fairly represented by the legal authorities and school officials.

We had a press conference on February 25, 2013, in front of the courthouse, and we made a personal appeal to the leaders in your community that the families were crying out for our help. (The complete press announcement is on our website: www.reclaimglobal.org, along with the suspected personality profile of Larry Heyward.)

Several victims have come to meet with us in Florida to ask for our help with their Estill/Heyward cases. We have done our Initial Trauma Assessment (ITA) on two of them, and we are completely convinced that Heyward sexually molested, violated, and mentally and physically abused them.

As was mentioned at the press conference, we know the difference between 'alleged' and 'guilty'. As an advocacy group, we have the right to speak up and petition for the rights of victims of sexual abuse. We also have constitutional rights to our opinion in these matters.

In the cases that we have been involved with regarding Larry Heyward – we want you to know, again, that there is no doubt in our minds that he is guilty of perpetrating many students at Estill Middle School. Yet, we know the legal process has to find him ultimately guilty.

Because the victims' names are sensitive information, we are leaving them out of this document, but I am sure you will know whom we are indicating. You spoke with the most recent victim that we sent to you, on Thursday, March 7, 2013. You interviewed the first victim that we help back in January. Your conversation, interview, and treatment of these victims, and their families are the reasons we are writing.

Let me begin from the top of our relationship with you, a Deputy of SLED.

1. Regarding the first victim – who presented the initial charge against Heyward, let us not be deceived as to why this family came to our organization. They were crying out for help, because they found no solace from anyone in their community, including the local sheriff's office or at the school. What Heyward did to this victim is unconscionable. They came to ReClaim Global because they heard we were a safe place to find help, and get direction on their case.

After spending many hours with this student, we realized that this was not a typical sexual abuse case. A seriously demented and dangerous man committed these crimes. We want to tell you that we believe he is a serious threat to this community and a flight risk. We base this on our work with over 1,000 victims of sexual abuse, and ReClaim Global's advisory counsel comprised of other mental health professionals.

2. We went into this ITA thinking we would just be encouraging this victim and recommending counseling steps. However, we were appalled by what we told. For this reason, we set up our press conference, believing we needed to put this community on alert.

3. During my Initial Trauma Assessment, this victim expressed feelings of an insufficient interview with the Sheriff's department, primarily because they were unskilled in asking the "right" questions. Therefore, this student confided to us that everything that happened was not shared. This is the reason we called you on Feb. 15th (see note #5 below)

4. We use skillful techniques to help victims feel comfortable in talking about their sexual abuse. Later, after meeting with us, this victim was directed to Hope Haven for a forensic interview. It was obvious, after our interview, the victim was more prepared to talk. However, the victim told us that not everything was disclosed to Hope Haven, because, "They didn't ask the right questions." Please keep this in mind, all sexual abuse victims that we have ever worked with have to be brought to a place of comfort and safety before they share the details about their sexual abuse. It is not unusual for the victim to "hope" that the interviewer will ask certain questions.

In these cases, we would expect that the officers would not be surprised that victims of Heyward, a deputy sheriff, would not want to talk to other officers.

5. We called you on February 15, 2013, to discuss the information that this first victim had shared with me. Dr. Kaye conference called you with two other colleagues (including myself), and we made note that you appeared to be very nervous in talking to us, despite us saying several times that we are here to serve your office. We mentioned that we were going to have a press conference in your city the following week. To us, it appeared that you were not able to comprehend what we were saying, specifically that we were not the press and that we really just wanted to serve your office and these victims. We have worked with many sexual crime detectives who have been extremely cooperative with us, and grateful for our help and insight. We certainly are not the bad guys. Our goal is to complement your work. You indicated that we should not be talking to you, but that you would have your Lieutenant call us. We are still waiting for his call, 904.233.9325.

During our conversation, we also suggested locations where there might be some forensic evidence for these cases. Your reply was, "Oh, I am sure he (Heyward) already got rid of that." We wondered how it was possible for you to know this when we had not even told you what evidence we were talking about, and the victim did not share the locations with you.

We are certainly not implying that you were being deceitful. We did suggest, however, that if the sheriff's department knew Heyward would "destroy" evidence -- why didn't you beat him to it? We do not understand this, quite frankly. How is it possible that Heyward can roam around destroying evidence? We feel that the legal officials should know his capabilities as a deputy sheriff.

6. ReClaim Global recently helped another family file charges against accused perpetrator Larry Heyward.

It has come to our attention that you actually interviewed this victim twice. It is also our understanding that the first time you interviewed this victim; there was so much intimidation that the parent did not want her child to be re-victimized. Furthermore, we were told that two people from your office indicated to this family that they should not have been treated that way.

You interviewed this victim and parent again this past week. After this second interview, we received a hopeless call from this family. We were shocked by how they reported they were treated-- as if they were the criminals. They clearly feel that you are more committed to your friendship with Heyward than to hearing and protecting them.

We feel we must bring to your attention that sexual abuse victims -- regardless of the rights of their perpetrators -- should always be handled with kid gloves. Every Sexual Crime unit that we have ever worked with has demonstrated sufficient knowledge of this. Never have we seen anyone verbally battered the way these victims report they were handled. This type of interrogation just produces more trauma in their lives. The mother of this victim is willing to speak openly about the way she was treated at SLED, by you, on two occasions. We are advising her not to speak with anyone at this time, unless they go through her attorney or our office.

We were informed that you told this family that because their case did not include penetration/rape, but only fondling and squeezing of the genitalia that there was not enough abuse to make a charge. We were incredulous that you intimidated these people so horribly. We are smart enough to consider that maybe this is all from their perspective. Maybe you thought your method was the only way to get to the truth. Our concern here is why this family would not continue their case with you after the first interview. Which was well before we ever got involved.

This kind of interrogation process makes me wonder if your organization does not have any sensitivity to what sexual abuse victims have endured. Do you realize that this victim attempted suicide twice because of the mistreatment at Estill and because of Heyward's torture? We feared that after your interview, this victim might try again.

We have spent lengthy time consoling the victims that have come to us, asking them to trust the process of America's legal system. But, hear us loud and clear – treating victims of sexual abuse as we described above is NOT acceptable.

We cannot believe that you sent this family away believing that the vile, sexual, handcuffed torment that this student endured – did not count as a case. In addition, the interrogation and intimidation that they endured with comments like "...they were in it for the money, why are they hooked up with ReClaim, they just want to make a name for themselves, etc..." – is ludicrous! We are here to defend these victims and their rights. We believe them. We believe this particular victim so much, and, during our ITA, we sensed a willingness only to trust us with part of the trauma endured. That is why we stopped asking questions. We felt we had enough to initially get this pervert, Heyward, off the streets.

We have waited patiently for you to press charges against Larry Heyward. We do not understand why this has not happened yet. You certainly had enough information to file charges.

ReClaim Global wants you to file these charges immediately against Heyward, and, we want you to apologize to both this parent and this victim, for the way they were treated during your interrogation. Moreover, this time we would like a skilled officer to talk with them.

Sexual abuse victims are very fragile. They certainly deserve fair treatment and much care and respect. We would NEVER send a victim to any police department if we did not believe what they told us. Every case that we have ever recommended has proven truthful.

7. ReClaim Global wants to ask you directly – why on earth did you indicate they did not have a case unless it included rape? Why did you say to them that you had a personal relationship with Heyward? Do you have any idea how that made them feel?

We all understand that knowing someone personally does not mean this person is incapable of molesting children!

8. ReClaim Global wants to set the record straight, Larry Heyward's victims and their families are not motivated by money. They want justice and help for their children. They

want healing. The reality is that only a jury can decide the financial compensation for this crime, if any. Let their cases be fairly judged.

ReClaim Global wants to add this statement because we know firsthand it is true -- NO ONE could ever possibly pay a victim of sexual abuse enough money to compensate for what he/she suffered. You cannot buy that pain out of anyone.

9. We are ReClaimers. We are over 300 strong and we actively defend the rights for sexual abuse victims. We use our voices to help the innocent. We use our voices to help the voiceless. We do this because when we were children no one helped us. We celebrate when justice is served, and for whatever it is worth, our founder, Dr. Kaye Smith has worked with victims for over five years without being paid a dime.

10. On another note – you know of other cases that involve more of Heyward’s victims. We have to wonder who is stifling them? We beg with SLED to not let these students hide the truth because of embarrassment in this community. These children need help. They deserve to heal. You need to investigate why Heyward’s family was trying to intimidate his victims while they were being interviewed at Hope Haven.

11. RECLAIM GLOBAL will be writing the judges about our opinions.

12. RECLAIM GLOBAL will help all of these victims. We will stand up and speak out for them and for anyone else who we believe to bring a truthful report.

We would like to offer your organization a chance to start over with us again and to begin a positive relationship with ReClaim Global. After all, we feel we should have a common goal – to make sure that sexual abuse victims are treated with the utmost respect and that the child molesters are held accountable for their actions.

Sincerely,

Faith Joyner
Director of Development