

I was raped when i was 12 years/old. The proposed House Bill would help to provide me justice where recently, other laws fell short. As I walk through my story, it's my goal to help us all better understand the psychological depth of this abuse and why it takes a victim so long to reconcile. But more importantly, why the elapsed time should not detract them from doing something when they finally awoken to the reality of, what I'd argue, is amongst the most insidious of all crimes.

Tune in tokyo. When I was 12 years old "Tune in Tokyo" was the phrase that Joel Cutler used when he touched my nipples for the first time, pretending it was WWII and my breasts were radio dials he used to call for help. We were laying in his bed at his house in London Ohio when he used this line on me for the first time. Tune in Tokyo. Kind of funny, isn't it? I thought so too. Because I was 12 years old. (pause) But let me back up a bit and tell you how we got to that point.

When was the last time you saw a 12 year/old? In many cases, this is when a child begins the early stages of puberty, including the development of secondary sexual characteristics. For me though, my growth spurt happened younger, around 10 years old. Do you have any idea what it's like to be the middle school-girl who was more physically developed than the rest? If being a middle school girl wasn't hard enough, I had the added pleasure of others teasing me about the size of my boobs - I had them ... and the others didn't. What I didn't know was this was the first of many vulnerabilities that made me an ideal object of sexual abuse. A young girl, with a mature body, who struggled to fit in - talk about an opening.

Add to that, a girl who was eager for attention (like all middle schoolers), a girl who was incredibly empathetic, and ... a girl whose parents worked a lot and trusted the schools, teachers, and coaches to keep their children safe. I was the perfect target. But even so, there needed to be a proper process of experimentation before Mr Cutler could fulfill his ultimate desires. Some might call this process of experimentation, grooming.

Olive Juice. As middle schoolers, we thought it was so funny that if you mouthed "Olive Juice", it appeared to someone across the room that you were saying "I love you." My first interactions with Mr. Cutler was at lunchtime recess. He monitored lunchtime recess. And he monitored me.

A group of us thought it would be funny to share this "Olive Juice" non-verbal communication with Mr. Cutler. He laughed along with us - commenting that he'd have to experiment with that for himself sometime. In the coming days following that lunchtime interaction, his experiment began. Mr. Cutler began mouthing, "Olive Juice" to me. Was he saying that he loved me? I wasn't sure, so the bold little girl that I was, needed to verify. Approaching him at recess, I asked, "did you just mouth Olive Juice to me?" "Yes," he replied, "but let's shorten it now to just Olive. That way when I mouth it to you, people won't see it and think I'm telling you that I love you. But you'll know... you'll know what it really means, Essie" That's a hell of a line that and let's all admit that would work on many of us as adults ... let alone, a 12 year old girl. I took the bait.

From there he began sharing with us that he worked at a local fitness center on nights and weekends, explaining that he was always bored at work and looking for someone to talk to. He'd say, "what do you have going on this weekend?" and "if you're also bored, you can give me a call at the fitness center." So, he gave me, my sister, and a few of our other friends the number. At times we'd call in groups and ... at other times, I'd call on my own. What I believed then was that he actually liked me, that he enjoyed speaking to a 12 year-old. Now, I can't speak for a middle school teacher but I'm inclined to believe that they would not want to entertain a conversation with their students on nights and weekends. But I can see now, with certainty, that this was just another one of his experiments. Which one of these girls has the guts to call and furthermore which one has the guts to call me on her own? In other words, who can I isolate? Again, I took the bait.

After a series of these experiments, dropping bigger, riskier, bolder, line after line, progressing me through what felt - at the time - like a fun game, a secret game, full of rewards and praise, - he knew. He KNEW that he had me. . . what's even more backwards about this type of manipulation, is that I was under the impression that I'd earned this, that it was me who seduced Mr. Cutler. Why Am I sharing this? Well, because, what this should illustrate to all of you is the severe psychological depth of this type of abuse.

He made me mixed CDs. He was a really big fan of 80s hair band music and hard rock/metal. But the mixed CDs he'd give me didn't include as much of the hard rock music he loved, like Metallica and Pantera, but rather, they were full of 80s rock ballads - love songs. But again, another covert clue of his intentions were the songs he included like "Hot for Teacher" by Van Halen and "Don't stand so close to me" by the Police. I want to share a few lines from this song ...

Young teacher, the subject  
Of schoolgirl fantasy  
She wants him so badly  
Knows what she wants to be

Inside him, there's longing  
This girl's an open page  
Book marking, she's so close now  
This girl is half his age

It's no use, he sees her  
He starts to shake and cough  
Just like the old man in  
That book by Nabokov

That book by Vladimir Nabokov is called Lolita. Where the Russian author takes on the controversial perspective of hebephiles. Unlike pedophilia - targetting prepubescent children. Hebephilia is the strong, persistent sexual interest by adults in [pubescent](#) children, typically ages 11-14.

“Coach Cutler, she’s only in 6th grade - she’s not allowed to run track. You have to be in 7th or 8th grade to play sports” a boy yelled out to Mr Cutler in front of a pre-season track workout that he had specifically asked me, and no other 6th grader, to join. “MAN, shut up, she’s allowed to practice with us because she’s a hell of an athlete. Twice the athlete you are.” Everyone laughed as Mr. Cutler embarrassed this boy in front of the entire track team. But all I heard? Was that I was a hell of an athlete and this HE wanted me on the team. Again, I took the bait.

One day after practice, for some reason my parents weren’t able to pick us up, so Mr. Cutler, already having started a strong rapport with my parents, offered to give my sister and I a ride home. But he didn’t just drop us off. He hung out at our house. Our parents were not home. And he hung out with us inside of our house. At one point, he made a comment, daring me to run around the block or something that night. Having a hunch that he was about ready to leave, I took the challenge and went on a run. I waited at the top of my block, where I saw him pulling out of my driveway. It was dark and he pulled his SUV up beside me and rolled down the window. “I am not allowed to kiss you but I want to.” he said. “I want to kiss you too,” I replied and at this point, with every other interaction we’d had, he’d created what felt like a safe place and therefore, an opening for me to initiate kissing him. So, I did. I was a 12 year/old girl, kissing a man twice my age. I took bait.

Things progressed rapidly from there. Let me share a few of the more triggering details of our sexual interactions.

On the weekends, i would meet Mr. Cutler at Hastings Middle School. One spot he preferred was the track shed. Inside the track shed, we’d lay on top of the high jump mats. Laying here, on the dirty track mats, was the first time our genitals touched. He’d have me rub my vagina on his penis and say things to me like “wow, i wonder if we’ll have sex before we do any other things?” I was 12 years old.

Other times, he’d have me meet inside of the Hastings gymnasium. I’d meet him at the side doors that he’d have propped open for me. There was a cutout between the bleachers where some gym mats were stacked. We’d lay on those and a similar type of sexual encounter as the track shed would occur. I was 12 years old.

Eventually, he got tired of meeting at Hastings, and wanted to meet somewhere more comfortable. BEcause of the relationship he’d cultivated with my parents, he asked them, if he could stay at our house after Friday night football games since he didn’t want to drive all the way home to London late after the games and back again first thing in the morning to watch film and the JV games. We had a split level house - the 3rd floor slept my parents and sister, the 2nd floor was the living room with the pull-out couch he stayed on, and the 1st floor was my bedroom and family room. Once everyone was asleep, he’d sneak down to see me. One night, we met on the family room sofa. He had me straddle him, and pulling my shorts to the side, pushed me down on top of his penis and sexually penetrated me for the first time. “You aren’t bleeding” he said. “You haven’t had sex before, have you?” “Of course not” I replied. Making me ashamed that my hymen had already ruptured. These sexual encounters happened all throughout the 2000 football season. Under my parents’ roof. I was 12 years old when I lost more than just my virginity to Joel Cutler.

Meanwhile, he was busy devising other plans for us to spend time together in an even more comfortable setting. His house in London. Behind the Upper Arlington High School football stadium, in a gravel lot, he'd have me climb in the back of his Ford Explorer SUV, and pull the vehicle's retractable cover over top myself and hide while he was finishing up his coaches meetings and after the football players had already left. I'd just wait there, in his hot car, for him to get out of his meetings. I'd hear them all leaving and one coach asking "what do you have going on this weekend, Joel?" "Oh nothing" he replied. "Just going to stay in and take it easy, ya know?" Then, he'd get in the car, shut the door, and ask "are you in here?". "Yes, I'd reply" and I'd ride, from Upper Arlington all the way to London Ohio, in the back of his SUV, under a hood. I was over heated from waiting in his hot car for over an hour, I was scared that someone would see me, I was certainly an Endangered Child, riding in the back of his SUV like that, and I was excited ... excited to see his place for the first time.

Over a series of multiple visits to his house, he'd have me take showers with him. Using his bright blue old spice body wash, I'd watch him shave his entire body. Oddly, he also always brushed his teeth in the shower.

In his bed, we'd watch some of his favorite movies, Se7en, Lost Boys.

In his bed, he'd tell me I smelled like her. Comparing my vagina to the smell of his ex-girlfriend, Heather's vagina.

In his bed, he'd have me pop a cyst on his back.

In his bed, he'd tell me we couldn't use a condom because it would smell like sex and my parents would know I was having sex.

And once, in his bed, his roommate came home unexpectedly, and he told me to hide in the closet. I climbed in, naked, and waited while I heard Cutler downstairs berating his roommate for coming home.

I was 12 years old when I entered, what I thought was, a relationship with Mr Cutler. But when I look back and see this abuse for what it was, I realize now how much I lost, not only over the years he was sexually abusing me, but for so many years after while I worked to understand why I was so unhappy. So self-destructive. And so, self-loathing.

Through a series of grooming tactics, befriending and gaining the trust of my parents. I lost everything. Part of my life was absolutely murdered. Arguably 20 years of it, until I awoke to

One of the worst casualties of this abuse was the loss of my relationship with my sister. He'd tell me things that he said he'd heard about my sister once she moved onto high school. And paint them out to be "sins", "bad news," or like "she's a bad influence on you." I thought I was better than her. And she just thought I hated her. I hate, looking back on that version of me. And I hate him for taking this relationship away from me.

My sister isn't the only person that suffered due to this abuse.. Every single person I've ever loved suffered because this abuse created a really ugly person inside of me. He chose me, so I was automatically better than everyone. He forced me to live a lie. living a double life, under extreme

amounts of pressure that no-child should have to endure over such a long period of time. Living this type of lie for so long, is a surefire recipe for depression, anxiety, PTSD, drug addiction and an array of other maladjustments.

Over the course of several years, Joel Cutler isolated me from my friends, made my sister an enemy, and took away my entire adolescence.

And as I stand here, addressing the Court, I am begging you to realize a sobering fact about the insidious nature of this abuse. Due to his masterful manipulation, his greatest weapon in all of this? Is you. Is me, is our entire culture of cover-up.

What do I mean by that. how did Joel Cutler use us all as weapons? Well, everyone wants to believe that they are a good judge of character. But what i'm asking everyone in this courtroom today to do ... is forgive yourself. Forgive yourself for failing to recognize these horrendous acts were happening. Because no one, absolutely no one is immune to his manipulation. This man is walking around in plain sight, and not even "the good judge of character." can identify him. He is a MASTER MANIPULATOR And when you strip away your pride, you will realize that you were ALSO a victim of his manipulation... and only then, will you be able to see the truth. And the truth is,... that there are many truths. So what is the truth about Joel Cutler?

Well, the truth is that this man is BOTH a coach AND a rapist.

This man is BOTH a teacher AND a rapist.

This man is BOTH a Christian AND a rapist.

And, this man is ALL things a friend, a husband, a father, a son, a brother AND this man is a rapist.

Why do these other aspects of his truth trump that he is a rapist? We wouldn't be giving this same grace to a murderer, would we? Yes, a murderess crime is just one instance typically and perhaps it's easier to come by physical evidence. But why do you think that is? It's easier to prove murder because the crime is reported almost immediately. Time enough to collect that physical evidence.

But due to both the psychological nature of this offense, along with our culture of cover-up, that we are ALL responsible for cultivating, it's no wonder that victims of child sex abuse don't come forward sooner. Because the message we are sending by baselessly charging rapists for crimes of a severely lower offense is that we don't believe victims, we don't understand the psychological nature of the victim's abuse, and frankly we haven't got the time to figure out a better way of bringing forth justice for these cases.

But throughout this entire process, they allowed me to think that I did matter and that I was believed, and that the criminal justice system does, in fact, care and were ready to fight along with me until ... one continuance after another, after another, after another, until ... in my case, Madison County prosecutors ... got tired? I don't know. But what I do know is that they, at the 11th hour, decided to take the easy way out, strike a deal, stoop to the level of the defense, get their felony tick mark to hang on their

re-election sign, and let this “no-other-criminal- record”, good-old-hometown-boy, rapist walk free. No wonder they didn’t tell me they were offering this agreement.

Ya know, unlike murder, Joel Cutler’s crime occurred - generously speaking - over the course of 4 years (or at least that’s what the law and evidence could indict him for). But what this man achieved was an entire lifetime of pain. What if - hear me out here - what if we started holding rapists accountable? What if in so doing, we saw crime reduced because the children who are being raped, aren’t growing up with a false sense of love that then manifests so easily in retaliation as adults when they realize, no one - especially the people who’s job it is to protect them - that no one gives a shit about them. What if we held rapists accountable? And convict them for being rapists? What if?

It took me close to 20 years to realize that I was a victim and even more, then, to do anything about it. How long is it going to take you? I don’t know what the solution to this problem is. Yes, more reform in these types of cases need to happen but those changes can only happen if we decide today to reject this plea agreement. We have an opportunity today, in this particular case, to set a precedent that will allow more victims to come forward and feel safe to do so earlier in life. That way more physical evidence can be salvaged, making these cases easier to try.

Ya know your Honor, all things considered, I’m doing pretty alright. Because the person you’re seeing here today has done a lot of hard work to be able to stand up here, with integrity and composure, fighting for myself, my family, my friends, and the safety of our community. But the ONLY reason that I am okay... is because I am in room of people right now, that were more powerful than this man over an even longer period of time, who collectively, and i do not say this lightly, who collectively saved my life. My kindergarten teacher is here. My 1st, 2nd, and 5th grade teachers as well. My 6th grade choir teacher Mr. Kauffman, the mandatory reporter that first took this case the UAPD is here. An uncountable number of my friends and their family members, all of my extended family, Chris Graham - a survivor of child sex abuse and a 9th inning advocate for me is here. Det Jason Amweg and Srgt. Matt Smith with UAPD, a great number of people from many chapters in my life are here today standing with me. And let’s not forget, my brother in law, Nea Koerner - who helped me with my original letter to you. My sister, Jane Koerner, who is without a doubt has been my number 1 support throughout this entire process, and my mom, Becky Baird, who without her discipline, structure and love and ability from afar, to teach me how to problem solve my way through life and stand up for myself, I am truly uncertain that I’d be standing here with you, today. I am so lucky.

So I ask, one last time, Your Honor, for the court to reject this plea agreement. And if you really want to know what I think? This man should be in prison.