

EATON SENTENCING STATEMENT-POVILAITIS 2.5.2018

Will we truly ever know the breadth of the evil acts committed by this Defendant? After 156 women came forward to share their heart-breaking experiences in Ingham County over 7 days, 48 new voices emerged to speak here in Eaton County and twelve women spoke in both counties. These women shared raw, emotional testimonies of not only what he did but what effect those acts have had on their lives and those of their families. Just as you told Annie Labrie, her story and her experiences matter. Their experiences weren't redundant. They not only showed this defendant's crimes and depravity, but the far-reaching effects that those crimes had on so many.

The breadth of the defendant's abuse and destruction is nearly infinite....it affects not only this County, but MSU communities, spans the State of Michigan, and reaches club and elite training gyms, college athletics, and even the US and international Olympic communities. Few sports were saved from his predatory behavior, over a dozen different sports brought athletes to him. His practiced and perfected abuse spanned over 25 years and included countless victims, beginning even before he was a doctor.

Focus on Eaton County-Gedderts' Twistarts Gymnastics Club

Many victims, including all three charged victims, were abused at Geddert's Twistars Gymnastics Club here in Eaton County but also abused at MSU sports Med Clinic and at his home in Holt.

The basic facts of his assaults have been recounted by the charged victims in this case, as well as the numerous victims who gave their impact statements. The facts that the defendant admitted to Your Honor under oath. That he penetrated these young girls' vaginas and anuses, with his bare hands, not for any medical purpose but for his own sexual purpose. He had erections as he performed these so-called "treatments." Children that were prepubescent, often unaware of their bodies. Children whose parents sat feet away. Children. This grown, adult man, took

sexual pleasure in the humiliation and exploitation of young girls and teenagers. As Rachael Denhollander said, not only did he commit those depraved acts of penetration but He liked it!

He supposedly practiced osteopathic manipulative medicine, but in truth, he was simply a master manipulator. He manipulated victims and parents. In competitive gymnastics, especially at the elite training gym TWISTARs, he found the perfect place for this master manipulation. In gymnastics: you do what you're told, hide your pain, hide your injuries. These young girls were constantly under the microscope and always on display. The "nice guy doctor" thrived at a place like Twistars: where cruel, harsh, mean and abusive coaches were the norm, he was the nice guy who could help you and be your confidant.

Gymnasts at Twistars HAD to see and be treated by him...told they were lucky to have him at their gym, cloaked in the prestige of USAG and MSU. An Olympic doctor, one who treated these young victims' heroes. He was the Olympic doctor, purported to have special knowledge a regular therapist didn't have. He was the perfect and only doctor to see.

But he was available and eager to help, even right here in this rural Michigan county. The victims and their parents felt special to be able to see him, an Olympic doctor. He adorned his office with pictures of Olympians he treated, with the far-off places his supposed expertise took him. He brought back tokens for his precious victims, regalia from competitions across the world, gifts he used to groom them and gain their trust.

And he was much more than just a doctor. He was Larry. He was their friend. A family friend. You heard from one victim, he was nearly a confirmation sponsor for her sister.

Monday nights in the backroom at Twistars-paint a picture.

Almost unbelievable, back locker room, people coming in and out, parents and coaches outside. Young girls lined up one after the other to be "treated" by the

purported gymnastics god but instead, young, prepubescent girls lined up one after the other to be abused—a cattle call of victims.

As one victim pointed out....two years, or 104 Mondays of abuse...

NO PROPER HEALING, NO PROPER TREATMENT, PAIN, LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES.

Defendant not only robbed these children of their innocence, but he robbed many of good health. With so many heartbreaking stories of unnecessary treatments, misdiagnosis, inaccurate medical treatment which resulted in lasting, permanent damage. Many of these survivors wonder whether their now lifelong injuries could have been treated had Nassar not wanted continued access to their young bodies. He wasn't a world-renowned doctor. As one of our experts so eloquently put it in preparing for this case, he was performing hocus pocus medicine.

Did he really think he was going to get away with this? Abusing so many, for so many years, over two decades, so many sports, no patient, no child was safe and yet, he also abused so many prominent Gymnasts? Maybe he did think he could beat the odds. And for years, he did. His lies worked. This Court heard from several women, some decades later, who were initially determined to be confused, or to be liars. He was believed over children. And with each time he got away, he was empowered to continue and perfect his techniques for abuse even more.

IT SHOULD NOT TAKE FINDING a collection of 37,000 vile and disgusting images to believe these women and girls. It should not require a life-altering journey by a vigilant and determined woman to expose the abuse. Investigative reporters should not be the only ones who are trusted to tell the whole truth. But thank god law enforcement found those images, Rachel persisted, and journalists took note.

But it should be easier than that; IT HAS TO BE easier than that. It can be easier than that. We must start by believing victims when they tell, regardless who the adult it or what prestige he carries or title he holds.

With this sentencing, I have had even more takeaways than I had just a week ago in Ingham County. There are two I wish to highlight:

Stop blaming. Stop blaming victims. Stop blaming parents.

And we must transform this pain and anger and hurt into something good

VICTIM SHAMING MUST STOP:

It is so hard for victims. What can't be seen from the bench or jury box is just how hard it was and is for many: physical manifestations of just how difficult it is to stand up, be identified, speak while standing only feet away from your abusers, for the all the world to hear and see. What is unseen to most: shaking hands, trembling bodies, knocking knees as they came to the podium to give their statement and confront him. Not easy. NO pleasure. We bore witness to real, unfiltered and raw.

We must stop blaming victims for not speaking sooner. These were young girls, who were groomed and trusted their abuser because of who he was. Just as most children do not immediately disclose their abuse, these young girls were so young and did not disclose or report their sexual abuse right away because they had no sexual experience to understand that it was wrong or to question their doctor and how he touched them. They should not be chastised for not speaking up sooner but praised for speaking up now.

Who would want to become a member of this sorority if they truly weren't victims???? These women gain nothing by bearing their souls, showing the entire world their pain. Not bandwagon jumpers. Not "in it for the money". Only cynical, dark-hearted people would routinely and repeatedly attack victims and their motivations. Uninformed, ignorant people who ignore true medical professionals,

who would STILL believe this was somehow legitimate medical treatment, even AFTER HE PLEADED GUILTY AND ADMITTED IT WASN'T, after hundreds of victim impact statements, and after medical professional after medical professional has rebutted any legitimacy, including victims who ARE doctors, like Dr. Brittney Schuman. Tone deaf deniers. The abuse was life-changing and life altering...but it doesn't have to be what defines them. They are all strong, brave survivors. Victim blaming must stop.

PARENTS SHAMING MUST STOP:

Parent shaming and blaming has to stop. It accomplishes nothing and more importantly, it's plainly unfounded. We are taught to trust. We have to trust. We can't be on guard all the time. And you expect certain people to be trustworthy. Among all the professions there are, we are, I would argue, above all taught to trust doctors. Especially those who appear to be world-class doctors.

Perhaps the people who parent-shame and -blame, who post comments online about the parents or call into radio shows to talk about the parents and what they should or shouldn't have done or have the nerve to talk about this to colleagues, without even knowing that their colleague IS in fact one of those parents as was told to me this past week....perhaps they are trying to distance themselves so they can believe it couldn't and wouldn't happen to THEM. BUT IT COULD. IT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO ANY PARENT. He fooled police officer parents, doctor parents, engineer parents...regardless of the profession, he fooled them all. And from this case, we have learned we cannot blindly trust anyone anymore.

A parent's responsibility is to take care of their kids and make sure they are safe. And they believed by taking him to a trusted doctor, they were taking care of them and making them safe. And the pain and guilt those parents feel, knowing they were fooled, knowing they couldn't protect their most precious thing on this earth is real. You can feel it and see it in this courtroom.

We saw that raw visceral pain and anger. The pain of a father who couldn't protect his three daughters, the pain of another father who chose to believe the molester over others. Who blindly supported Nassar when others disclosed until finally, his own daughter said me, too.

What we witnessed last week is that pain and anger come to a boil. While we know in our minds that we cannot combat violence with violence, any parent and any human can understand how a father can have that visceral reaction, especially not only as he listened to his daughters describe graphic details of abuse but at the same time saw his daughters' abuser shake his head in denial. What we see are parents with broken hearts. Hearts that will never fully mend because of what he did.

My message to the parents of these survivors. Parents, please try to let your guilt go. YOUR CHILDREN DO NOT BLAME YOU. You are good parents. Great parents. You believe your daughters. You stand with them. You support them. You will be there to comfort them, to wipe their tears, calm them after their nightmares. To show them they are not broken.

Because they are not broken. You are not broken.

Sterling Rietham, a survivor who spoke in Ingham County, recently said it so well: To parents, Remember, you didn't feed us to the wolf. You raised us strong enough to take down the wolf.

What we saw last week, pain and anger and suffering was not limited to victims or parents. This whole community and many around the world watch and feel that anger and pain and helplessness. But there is no place for blame or shame on victims or parents.

BLAME AND SHAME BELONGS ON ONE PERSON-DEFENDANT

TRANSFORMING PAIN AND ANGER AND HURT INTO SOMETHING POSITIVE...

This community's pain, anger, and suffering has to go somewhere. It has to stop. We must heal. We must heal for our kids.

Pain had to go somewhere. We've seen where it went when it was shrouded in darkness and shame and guilt. The victim's experiences with anxiety, self-harm, addictions, depression, PTSD, suicide attempts.

I truly believe we have seen the worst of humanity in these last few weeks, and we've also seen the best. We have seen pain and destruction caused by evil selfish takers, but we have also seen how one voice can start a movement, how a reckoning can deliver justice, how investigative journalism can inform and educate and empower other victims to come forward. How a community of support can empower and start healing.

Survivors and parents and community: I beg you to use and transform your pain and anger constructively, to fuel change, use that anger to give you strength to fight these bigger battles ahead...Cast the shame and guilt aside and cast it where it belongs. On him. Don't lock yourself up in your own mental prison cell with the anger and pain and guilt and shame. Let Defendant be the only one who knows the inside of a prison.

This community is at a crossroads. The pain and anger from the abuse of 250+ lives and the havoc on their families and the affront to the whole community must be transformed into strength, it must blossom and bloom into change and prevention and progress. Something good must come from this. It may be hard to see but already much good has come from this pain and hardship:

1. Voices of victims are supported and believed and heard
2. Victims are not alone, parents are not alone, and they are not the only ones with these feelings of shame and guilt and confusion and anger

3. Young woman were empowered to stand up for themselves

4. And now we can be sure that a group of determined women can transform into advocates of change... That won't stop here.

How do we continue to move forward and find good: Just like Larissa Boyce said: Don't forget them. Don't forget the survivors, ...Don't forget their faces, their stories and experiences, their pain and anguish, their strength and bravery. And don't forget parents and close relatives, too.

This good will lead us toward the path of healing and reformation. For the survivors, it takes a lot of work and determination to be free of what he did. It is something you constantly have to overcome, again and again and again and you never know when or how that will present itself. It takes strength, courage and hard work to overcome what he so cavalierly took. But you have within you that strength and courage.

We must seize and focus on that good, but never forget the evil because the only way to prevent it is to first be aware of it. Sexual abuse in every aspect of society, but especially in these types of settings, lives and breeds in darkness, in secret. The only way to heal and move forward and to protect and prevent others from this fate is to bring it out into the open...to shed light on dark secrets through exposing the truth.

BRING IT BACK TO VICTIMS and DEFENDANT...

Judge Cunningham, I whole-heartedly want to thank you and your staff for graciously allowing every victim who wished to speak to be heard. What we have witnessed here in your courtroom and in Ingham County is unprecedented but hopefully not the last time victims will be heard in this manner. The patience, kindness and empathy you have shown and the encouraging words you have given each will help them all realize that they and their experiences matter.

I again want to thank each survivor: For coming forward, for trusting us, for doing what was so hard and difficult, especially at the time of reporting and charging and testifying in court. On behalf of the entire team attorney general and msu pd we believe you and always have. We thank you. We are proud to stand up for, and with you. You are our heroes.

The work done by the MSU PD, led by Chief Dunlap and Det/Lt. Andrea Munford was nothing short of tireless excellence. I am proud of the work the entire attorney general's office team has done on this case, starting with the unwavering and full support of Attorney General Bill Schuette. We have investigated and prosecuted this case in a victim-centered, offender focused manner and encourage all other police and prosecutors to adopt the same approach and take on these challenging cases.

Over the last several days, on our screen you have seen these young innocent faces. That was on purpose. Every day you saw strong, brave, fierce survivors come to the podium...but that's not who Defendant saw...he was attracted to and abused those girls in those pictures. But judge, what you didn't see is all the sweet young innocent faces of girls who have been spared a similar fate because these brave women all spoke up and never gave up.

Sentencing must protect, punish and deter. Through your sentence I ask you to do all three. Judge I ask you to bring these victims the justice they so deserve. We ask you to follow the sentence agreement and sentence the Defendant to 40 years to at least 125 years in prison.