



A White Paper: *Child Abuse – Unfortunately, it is about ... Who You Know*

**By Gregg Tyler Milligan, Author & Abuse Prevention Advocate
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<http://www.godmustbesleeping.com/>

Between publication of my first book, *A Beautiful World*, 2009 and then later, *God Must Be Sleeping*, 2011 – I have come to be presented with a myriad of myths regarding not only Child Abuse, but Abuse of [any kind]. I come to both read and hear these myths thrown about like hardcore facts. If someone has read my book(s) or heard me speak, read an article regarding my story and/or advocacy or have seen me on television; they're first and last response is usually: "Not The Mom ... Oh No! A mother would never harm her children!" To this I say, "Yes, the mom." Before losing the reader already, let me make a definitive point: *I am and forever will be – gender agnostic*. I do not seek, nor do I endorse anyone who claims that one parent is better or worse than the other. I exercise great caution when dealing with abuse, and therefore, my research is based on fact and not prejudice. It would be an awful disservice to all of the work regarding abuse prevention and the treatment of those who are abused if I were to 'pick a gender.' In addition, to do so would count me as one of many short-sighted hypocrites.

With that said, let me get to the nucleus of this White Paper. When a mother murders her children, it becomes a feeding frenzy for the media. What is so disturbing and also perplexing about "Mother's Who Abuse Their Children" stories, is that they are treated like a rare occurrence. They are tragic, but far from rare. It is a fact that the majority of crimes against children are committed by their own family or friends. An easy explanation to this is best said: "Location. Location. Location." The trend is always the same when a story makes the news about a mother who abused and/or killed her children – Denial. Shock. Denial.

Let's take a closer look at the facts of this particular crime. The children were murdered by someone they knew and trusted; therefore, this is not an unusual story. However, with increasing awareness through social welfare programs, readily available information at a keystroke, and countless documented reports to the contrary – the general public often still believes that the greatest threat to children is from strangers.

Admittedly, I was abused by strangers. But, my [primary] abuser was my mother. Beyond trying to understand why or how she would do such a thing; try to begin with simply realizing one of the main reasons was the fact I lived with her. When I was removed from my mother's home at the age of 11, my mother no longer abused me. Geographical relations between the abuser and the victim are key. Put it another way and I am intentionally being trite here: William "Willie" Sutton (June 30, 1901 – November 2, 1980) was a prolific American bank robber. During his forty-year criminal career he stole an estimated \$2 million, and eventually spent more than half of his adult life in prison. "Willie" Sutton is known, albeit apocryphally, for the urban legend that he said he robbed banks "*because that's where the money is.*"

Another fact which many are unaware is that the vast majority of crimes against children are not committed by sex offenders or strangers, but instead by the victim's relatives, friends, and people they knew in the community.

According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, "*Based on what we know about those who harm children, the danger to children is greater from someone they or their family knows than from a stranger.*"

A 2000 report by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs reported that over three-quarters of kidnappings were committed by family members or acquaintances of the child. The study also found that children abducted by strangers were harmed less frequently than those taken by acquaintances.

In fact, children are in far more danger of being abused, kidnapped or killed by their parents than any stranger on the street.

Another distributing question posted to me during speaking events, which clearly shows true ignorance and prejudice on the part of the person asking, is the following: "Do you think mothers kill children at least as often as fathers do?" My response is always the same: "Does it matter?" And, I feel my response is still far too gentle.

According to a report titled "Homicide Trends in the U.S.," issued by the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics, of all children under age five murdered between 1976 and 2005, 31 percent were killed by fathers and 29 percent were killed by mothers.

I personally do not care whether it is the father or mother who kill their children more or less. What matters to me is the child was killed. Tell me: "How many dead soldiers does it take before we declare defeat in any war?" My answer: "One."

A 2000 study conducted by Marlene Dalley, Ph.D., analyzed trends in Canadian child murders and concluded that "Both mothers and fathers kill infant children at the same frequency, though when all (victim) age groups are considered mothers and step-mothers killed more children than fathers and step-fathers."

A 2003 study reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that of 34 North Carolina newborns who were killed or left to die, at least 85 percent of them were killed by their mothers (usually through strangulation or drowning).

In fact, the risk of a person being murdered -- probably by his or her mother -- is 10 times higher during the first day of life than at any other time. This of course flies in the face of the public's perception of women as protective nurturers, but the fact is that women murder children far more often than people realize.

Again, I say "It does not matter who killed the child."

"A child has died. In his place, there now sits a man – ruined. You were supposed to have saved me." An excerpt from God Must Be Sleeping, Chapter Eight – Those Missing Things.

... Another child has died. That is all that matters.

Gregg Tyler Milligan is an internationally-known author and child abuse prevention advocate. He has written two books, A Beautiful World, detailing his childhood and the horrific suffering Milligan endured at the hands of his mother and strangers. Milligan later completed the continuation to A Beautiful World, describing his next eleven years. Both books are published under the same volume, titled God Must be Sleeping. Milligan is a member of the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) Speakers Bureau and continues to spread his message of hope.

In his words, "Please remember, the reason we are here is to save one another – Break the cycle." More information can be found at godmustbesleeping.com/.