

The False Memory Brigade

It is morning in America. Megan's Law went into effect on May 17, 1996. The AMBER Alert System is currently set up in 46 states. Sexual assaults are down by 50% since 1993. All is going well in the fight against sexual abuse. Right?

Not quite. A growing menace lurks in the shadows, if you look closely. Underneath what appears to be a rock-solid foundation are hostile forces hard at work. What are these rumblings, you might ask?

None other than the voices of the False Memory Brigade, a loose network of sexually abusive parents held together by a common belief—that their children were brainwashed by “quack therapists” into leaving them. Never mind that their children thought out therapy on their own. They will hear none of it. They've built a wall of denial taller than the Tower of Babel.

The fact that they blame therapists but not their children points to their culpability. They regard children as puppets rather than as human beings and cannot fathom children with separate thoughts of their own. Furthermore, their need for emotional fulfillment precludes them from targeting their own children. After all, they want their kids back so they can resume the incestuous relationship. Any suggestion that their needs have superseded the well-being of their children is met with resentment.

The irony about this sad state of affairs is that they've managed to turn it upside down. Whether they were mindful of their actions or not, they conditioned their kids into believing their upbringing was normal. Akin to Stockholm syndrome, the children were hostages who had fallen under the spell of their captors. Raised in a dysfunctional family, they had known no other reality—they had no choice but to submit to the will of their parents. From that standpoint, the therapists can be seen as liberators.

Mark Pendergrast, an “authority figure” within the ranks of the False Memory Brigade, disputes the notion of covert incest in his book *Victims of Memory*, even though he admits that parents do engage in what constitutes such behaviors. He refuses to admit any wrongdoing on the part of the parents. Instead of encouraging them to acknowledge fault and rectify relationships, he merely shrugs it off as “being human.” Pendergrast ends his critique on covert incest by stating:

While this phenomenon is unfortunate, however, it is fairly normal and widespread, and it is not incest, emotional or otherwise.

An absurd argument, to say the least. Just because covert incest is common and widespread does not make it acceptable by any means. Perhaps he thinks the same

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of rape and pedophilia—after all, they are widespread. But are his views really that contagious?

If history is to serve as our guide, then yes. If an idea is repeated often enough, people will begin to believe it. Lies become truths and truths become lies.

But if history is to provide any consolation for us, then the truth will eventually prevail. Aesop reassures us that you can fool the people some of the time, but you can't fool them all of the time.

As disheartening as it may seem, one can only hope that someday the False Memory Brigade will face the truth about itself—that it was the sexual abuse that drove the children away. Then it would truly be morning in America.

Moriji