

That she may dance
again essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Sexual abuse is one of the common diseases of our country. Wherever you go, there are cases of women being sexually assaulted. It may be in the family, in the workplace, in the society and even in the Church where the person belongs to. That she may dance again by Sr. Nila V. Bermisa, MM. tells about violence against women happening within the walls of the Philippine Catholic Church. Its major theme is justice seeking by and for women abused within the Roman Catholic Church. Sexual abuse by the members of the clergy is one of the controversial issues that is frequently being masked by the Church and on which most are not aware of. The book basically tells about the history and faces of violence in our country as well as personal stories from the victims and the impact that it has brought into their lives. The purpose of the work is to encourage and enable women, especially those who were abused, to seek justice, stand up against their pain, and become the agents of change as well.

In the first chapters, the author tells her and her companions' respective journeys of fighting violence against women within the Catholic Church and the different organizations like the WGC (Women and Gender Commission), AMRSP (Association of Major Religions Superiors in the Philippines), SABAKAN, KALIKASAN, and Talitha Cum that help abused women to recover and to attain justice. Even as a child, the author has already shouldered the burden of these women. Together with their companions they try to help these women by helping them seek justice and encouraging them to become catalysts of for empowerment of other women. The author tells her journey and experiences with these women and their struggle to find just relationships with men. The first chapter also accounts for biblical verses

interpreted in a feminist's point of view. The story of Jairus and the sleeping little girl found in the book of Mark was given a different light. For feminists, the story tells that when a girl reaches womanhood, she is vulnerable to the sicknesses of the society such as prostitution, human trafficking, etc. so it is the duty of the society to protect her and help her rise to claim her place in the church and society. The different faces of violence were introduced in the second chapter.

Violence against women is really something that takes away the purity and humanity of a person. Violence against women can be seen in different sectors. Each of these sectors, each different from one another, are united by the fact that the male dominates over the females. In the family, the women are housewives whose responsibility is to take care of the children and most of the time they are also the breadwinners of the family whose task is to make sure that food will be put into the mouths of her children and jobless husband. It is also in the family that they are susceptible to abuse. Women are often abused by their husbands and cannot breakaway because of her children. In the labor force and the military women are also vulnerable to sexual abuse from their male co-workers and soldiers. They are usually being threatened by their superiors and could not tell a word for fear of losing jobs. The church and the society also play a part in the disempowerment of women.

In the society and church, there is the image of patriarchy which has been embedded to our culture up until now and which is hard to fight with.

Women are deprived of their privilege to serve the lord as evidence of the dominance of the male clergy. The Church and its early scriptures and

<https://assignbuster.com/that-she-may-dance-again-essay-sample/>

teachers see women as deformity of men. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, sees women as “ misbegotten males” (p. 53). Even in the bible, there are passages that try to belittle women. Both the Church and the society see that men are superior to women and women are denied of their service. Sexual violence is a disease that is hard to fight with. In our country, the laws such as VAW were implemented to protect the women form these abuses. The third chapter tells about the empowerment and disempowerment of women throughout history and the impact it has brought to their lives. In the Philippines, before the Spanish colonization and the advent of Christianity women are seen as equal to men. They are employed as the spiritual leaders of the society in the form of babaylans and thus are respected. For some cultures, when a woman is disgraced it is the whole tribe or community is affected.

It shows that women are highly respected in the society. But when the Spanish came, they accused the babaylans of witchcraft and were stripped of their titles. The women were not allowed to serve the society she belongs to. The Church and its early teachings basically taught women to be submissive and gave them a view that women are inferior to men. The response of the society and the Church itself about the issue were also presented. The response of the society and the Church gives about the issue are usually negative especially to the side of the women. For the eyes of the society, accusing a religious leader might bring karma to the family and the people. There is disbelief and the women are usually the ones who are got blamed instead of their abusers. The abusers, on the other hand, are the ones being sympathized for being imperfect human beings prone to

temptations. Somehow the issues are presented the other way around.

These issues are deliberately misunderstood, ignored and oftentimes are being kept secret and the victims are asked to withdraw the complaints in order to protect the image of the Church. Something that is powerful as the Church is really difficult to fight against with.

The fourth chapter highlights the stories of abuse that some women encountered within the Church and the impact that it brings to their life especially to their spirituality. The victims reported to have felt shame and that their spirituality has been torn. They could no longer live a normal life and could no longer attend mass. Their faith towards God was also in the brink of collapsing. They could not believe that the ones they regard as holy will do something vile to them. The abuse they encountered brought a plague into their lives. Their well-being and their spirituality were torn apart. In the last two chapters, the author shares her thoughts about the new life waiting for the victims of sexual abuse within the Church. The book tells us that there is new path and life waiting for the abused and that they need to stand up to gain fullness of life. The essence of the fullness of life is not only for them but also for all creations. The vision of Project Babaylan, which is a project of the Talitha Cum Center, is to encourage women to regain strength, attain justice, and embrace the fullness of life. The author also shares her dream of rebuilding a new Church wherein women and men are equal.

The book envisions a new Church wherein women are given the privilege to serve the lord and Church alongside their male clergy members. The book is a strong work with firm arguments and facts. There is no doubt that such cases of abuse by the members of the clergy does happen. The work is a

<https://assignbuster.com/that-she-may-dance-again-essay-sample/>

good instrument of educating the people about what is really happening inside the walls of the Church. The way it is written is also informative and non-sexist. For example, instead of kingdom the author writes it as kin*dom. This book is a good example of a literary work that empowers women. The book's main arguments and thoughts also possess strong notions. The manner by which the book dealt with some of the bible passages concerning women was of great interest. It was deeply explored and was given a different type of interpretation- one which is acceptable to the feminists and those who strive for equality.

The issues presented are really controversial but it is what is happening in the present time. These issues are worth mentioning and giving emphasis for it could no longer be hidden. What the book has said is practically true especially in our country. Violence against women is a daily social reality that we cannot deny of. Every day we can hear in the news of such cases. It could also no longer be denied that the Church sector has a part in inflicting pain on women, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Setting aside the negativities, the book also showed us the possibility of having a society where women and men are seen as equals and that women can serve the church alongside the male clergy. The book deserves merit for it widens our scope and wakes us from our ignorance. It tells us what is happening at the present time yet it does not also fail to educate us the history of empowerment and disempowerment of women.