

Santanic ritual abuse essay



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is it Real? How real is the threat of satanic ritual abuse? Are people actually recovering repressed memories of satanic abuse as a child? Is there a widespread epidemic of Satanism sweeping the country, or is it all a hoax? We will answer these questions and many others in the next few pages, as we sift through the facts to find the truth about satanic ritual abuse.

In the article, *The Devil, You Say*, David O'Reilly of the Philadelphia Inquirer claims that the idea of rampant Satanism in America is more hype than fact. O'Reilly says that despite the lack solid evidence the "satanic panic still surges, fanned by the sensationalist news organizations, preachers, zealous police, and eager psychologist who contend that countless infants are being slaughtered in secret satanic rituals"(2). O'Reilly contends that leading questions such as "If you had been abused, what might have happened?", or "Were the people wearing robes? Did any of them have horns?" can steer people to remember things that did not happen(5). He goes on to say that most Satanism is pseudosatanism, there to bait young emotionally abandoned kids into pornography, sex, or drug distribution.

O'Reilly believes that the satanic hysteria is distracting us from the real problem of child abuse by friends, parents, and other relatives. David O'Reilly seems to take on the topic of satanic ritual abuse very fair-mindedly. Instead of constantly inserting his opinions, he uses the voice of other experts to express it for him. He tries to show both sides of the argument, by comparing the claims of people on either side of the issue. I found that some of the most convincing arguments came from people like Kenneth Lanning,

the head of the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit, and Dr Pamela Freyd of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation.

Although there seemed to be a little bias, the way in which O'Reilly presented claims and counterclaims, made it appear more fact than opinion and speculation. In reading Jeffrey Victor's article, *Satanic Cult's Ritual Abuse of Children: Horror of Hoax?*, in the November 1993 USA Today it is easy to see that Victor prefers the contemporary legend theory for explaining the SRA phenomenon. Contemporary legends or "urban legends" are rumor stories that are shared orally using symbolic metaphors to "communicate shared anxieties about newly perceived threats" (Victor 3). Victor puts much of the blame for spreading these rumors on the psychotherapy community. He goes on to claim that counselors of all levels attending seminars on SRA and unknowingly placing those ideas in their patients heads. He then says that the false allegations have ruined the personal and professional lives of many of the accused.

Victor finally concludes that the real losers are the patients, who are "victims of a new psychotherapy fad, which offers false hope of solving their real psychological problems" (6). Jeffrey Victor is a sociology professor at Jamestown community college in New York. He wrote a book on the subject of Satanism called *Satanic Panic: Creation of a Contemporary Legend*. Victor uses his sociological perspective, well throughout the article. He applies it masterfully when comparing validity of the different theories. He does not cite many sources, and has no problem expressing his opinion.

While he sounds bias towards his opinions, he does a good job of backing them up and convincing the reader. It was a informative and thought provoking article. In the February 5 1989 issue of the St Louis Post-Dispatch Ellen Futterman wrote a piece called Hints of Darkness: Satanism Reports Stir Worry, in which she discusses the events warranting the Satanism scare. She opens with the story of Liza a four year old girl whose father was convicted of sodomizing her in a satanic ritual.

Futterman goes on to say that the number of stories alone is enough to warrant some concern, although she admits much of it is not corroborated. She continues by saying that satanic rituals are on the rise with teen-agers, in the worst case a classmate was murdered with a baseball bat and dumped in a cistern with two squirrels and a cat. Futterman claims that there are fifty thousand human sacrifices a year, “ and the bodies are not found because they are mutilated, the blood drained and any remains not used for ritual purposes are burned” (3). She then talks about officer Bopp a police officer who specializes in Satanism and tries to help the community however he can. In the end she tells of make shift altars, vague satanic symbols, seances, and mutilated animals.

Which leaves the reader no real conclusion but much to ponder. Ellen Futterman had a very fair-minded approach to this article. There is not much opinion expressed, more of a presentation of events. While it appears that that she leans towards believing the SRA stories, she presents the facts in a manner that allows you to form your own opinion and decide for yourself. She does not attempt to discredit any other sources, but this could be seen as fueling the fire of the Satanism scare.

She comes off as reliable, credible, and just trying to help inform her community. I was able to learn a lot about the Satanism scare of the eighties through reading these three articles. They each took a different approach to the subject. David O'Reilly believes that it is all a bunch of hype, made worse by the media, and others who attempt to use fear for their own personal gains. Jeffrey Victor took different approach saying that the problem is nothing more than an urban legend, fueled by our fear of the unknown and our similar anxieties. Ellen Futterman is the only one of these three that thinks it may be true.

Based on the convictions of a few, and the sheer volume of stories she believes that there must be something going on. I personally understand where they are all coming from. I believe that Satanism does exist, but it is less about human sacrifice and more about scaring your parents. It is hard to say whether recovered memories are real or not, with the therapist being able to easily influence the patient it hard to decipher what is real and what isn't. In conclusion I found all the articles to be entertaining and informative, and don't believe SRA was as widespread as some people would like you to believe.

Works Cited Futterman, Ellen. " Hints of Darkness: Satanism Reports Stir Worry. " St Louis Post-Dispatch 5 February 1989: 1A. SIRS Researcher. SIRS knowledge resource. Guilford Technical Community College.

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