

## LINA\*

Since my early childhood, I never recalled having been cheerful in my life. My trials in life started when I reached five years of age. I can never forget the things that happened to me then due to the extreme pain and grief caused by my devil of a father. I know that one should respect one's parents because we owe them our lives but sometimes we cannot avoid condemning them due to their own doing.

It all started when I was only five years old, when I started carrying the burden of my messy life—my own father and an uncle raped me. They satisfied their lusts on me despite all my cries for mercy. They simply ignored all my pleas and despairing voice. I ran away from home, went to my grandma and although the latter's household did not take advantage of me, I was virtually regarded as a housemaid. When I reached the age of seven, I strived to study although it was difficult for me. I went home once more to those who raped me. I patiently bore all hurts inflicted on me in order to finish my education. My teachers were wondering why I always looked sad but I was still determined to learn in class. I graduated from elementary grade. When no one attended my graduation, I felt bad. After graduation, I told them that I would be going to Leyte to finish my studies but they did not allow me. One day, my father talked to me. His mind then was a bit clear because he was not on drugs. He told me that he was not my real father, and that my real father was the person whom

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\*(Translation from Filipino) Lourdes M. Portus, (1999) "Negotiating Power: The Communications Process and Women in Prostitution." Unpublished dissertation.

I had been regarding as my uncle. And that my mother was already dead—they had also taken advantage of my mother which caused her heart attack and death.

I sued them in court when I reached the age of 16 years old. But to no avail because they had the law in their hands. They held me captive and again raped me . . . I ran away from home. I had the good fortune of meeting a man. He was ready to share his life with me, despite my ugly past. He was my first love. I liked his manners. I made up my mind to go with him because I much wanted to have an inspiration and I would start to experience true love . . . I thought I would experience all of those good things with him but I was mistaken because it was all short-lived . . . and what was painful was learning that he had a wife and a child when I bore our baby boy . . .

I overcame all of those . . . I went away with my dear child never to see him again. I thought of going back home when my child got sick and I had nothing more to feed him. On that day it was raining hard . . . we were drenched . . . and my child's condition worsened. I felt great pity for my child . . . I gave him his feeding bottle containing water sweetened with a little sugar. I kept knocking on the door but no one bothered to heed us . . . despite my pleas for mercy. Finally, our neighbors saw us and had pity on us, they took us in, gave me and my child a place to sleep in and brought my child to a doctor.

My child was getting better. One day I went out for a little while and left my child in their care . . ., suddenly, my father took him away . . . and me, too . . . and once again they held me captive . . . my tribulations started once more . . . I thought of running away and simply leaving my child with them. I did run away and went to Leyte. By coincidence someone offered me a job in Manila and I agreed to go. I

was surprised when we reached the Pasay terminal. We took another ride—a bus going to Olongapo. Upon reaching Olongapo, they restricted us within a single room without us really knowing then the door's exact location. We were continually offered for sex from one customer to another. Until I met one from Cebu . . . he paid me but I didn't know that he was also a demon. He brought us to work in a Night Club in Parañaque but I didn't stay there for long . . . I ran away and I eventually found myself in Cubao. I didn't know what the operation was in Cubao but gradually I learned. Until I became like any one of them.

Since the time that I learned about SINAG I seemed to experience a rebirth because they explained to me the value of life. But I couldn't say just then that I was happy . . . because I would frequently remember my son and his father—the first man whom I ever loved.

On January 8, 1993, I was arrested for vagrancy and jailed. Since my incarceration, I have never been caught again . . . and I no longer frequented Cubao. And I was thinking about going home despite my experiences with my father. I felt very confident because my best friend Daisy, had accompanied me but then we did not stay long there because we couldn't get along well with my father. I was always thinking of my son . . . although he is not by my side, I still love him very much. I want to be able to help him but I cannot in conscience support my son from the fruits of my sex trade. Which is why I asked for SINAG's assistance for me to get a job.