

Shame As A Weapon

Shame is a club that beats enslaved women at practically every turn. It starts when young girls from impoverished families are blamed for the destitution of their parents. “Good” daughters manage the health and welfare of their mother and father. Their suffering translates into her shame, so she is willing to make any sacrifice to change their condition.

The community’s perception of sexual purity also plays a major role in a young girl’s shame. Once an unmarried girl has lost her virginity, she is considered despoiled. It does not matter if a family member sexually abused her or a stranger raped her. Purity is all or nothing—either you have it or you don’t. Her family will treat her as blight to its honor, and no ‘respectable’ man will want to marry her. The girl might as well be sold into a life of prostitution, for she has lost her innocence. So strikes the club of shame.

Traffickers and brothel owners alike also use this cultural value to manipulate girls. If a new recruit resists the idea of having sex with a paying customer, the slaveholder might rape her himself and say, “Now you are used goods; you might as well give it up for other men.” Tragically, the girl is apt to understand the logic of this brutal indoctrination and resign herself to life in the brothel. She has lost everything—her family will reject her and her neighbors will treat her as a pariah. And each day she stays, the possibility of rejoining respectable community life diminishes. She lives in exile.

Used by permission from <http://www.NotforSaleCampaign.org>