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# Community forum

## 'Spotlight' and ties to Louisville

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Apply named Spotlight, the recently released film focuses on the Boston Globe's investigation of the decade's old conspiracy to protect pedophile priests perpetrated by the leaders of the Catholic Church. Those of us who watched a similar story unfold here in Louisville will find the events depicted in this riveting film, all too familiar.

Spotlight takes its name from the newspaper's elite group of investigative reporters whose apparent autonomy allowed them to pick and choose where the Globe would focus its investigative resources. Enter the Globe's newly hired editor in chief, Martin Barron. In the film, Barron takes his lead from a Globe op-ed piece written by Eileen McNamara that questioned the large number of sexual abuse lawsuits, all against a single priest.

As the film progresses it becomes increasingly clear that it is Barron's leadership that motivates what would become a historical investigation, an investigation that would lead to the revelation that the Boston Archdiocese knowingly had willfully shuffled abusive priests from parish to parish within the Boston Archdiocese without warning the parishioners of the imminent threat to their children.

The film also "spotlights" Mitchell Garabedian, an eccentric attorney, who in July 2001 represented 80 adults against the Boston Archdiocese, each claiming he or she was sexually abused as a child. There are problems with Garabedian's lawsuits, as the legal time for filing them may have expired, resulting in little to be gained for the victims.

Eric McElfish, another attorney who steers his own clients through secret settlements with the church, warns Garabedian that unless he can expose the church in the press, his cases are virtually worthless. Even when Garabedian eventually persuades a cleric, "Patrick," to tell his story to the Globe, Spotlight's editor, Ben Bradlee Jr., questions whether there is proof that the church's hierarchy had acted to cover up the abuse.

The film not only spotlights the Globe's participation in ultimately exposing the church, through Garabedian, but also is forced to reckon with the Globe's role in perpetuating the abuse, as it becomes apparent that since the late 1990s the Globe had been complicit in the Church's conspiracy to protect itself from financial ruin.

The film also forces us to see the parents of victims placated by false assurances that that the Church was unaware of the priest's risk to the parish children and that the offending priest would never be allowed to harm another child. As an additional incentive to quiet the parents, the Church paid significant sums of money, but with the requirement that the parents and child keep the matter entirely confidential.

Spotlight permits us to share the perspective of the abused by introducing the viewer to a handful of "survivors" who came together in Boston to form "SNAP" — Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, which Spotlight reporters paid little attention to SNAP. Instead, the Church enjoyed near omnipotence, as very few of the Globe's Catholic readership were willing to believe that lawsuits against priests and the church were based on valid claims of abuse, chalking them up to the speculation of greedy lawyers, or isolated, random acts of a few rogue priests.

Writer/director Tom McCarthy chose the abuse stories of three men as a backdrop to the overall investigative journalism theme. The story is ghostly narrated by the voice of Richard Sipe, always spoken over the telephone. Sipe is a former priest who became an expert witness against the Church and guides the reporters in their investigation.

Phil's, Joe's and Patrick's stories are well selected from the hundreds

of thousands of stories of priest abuse in the United States. They captivate and horrify us as we are introduced to the details of their vulnerability, innocence and near destruction by agents of their own church. Phil, Joe and Patrick each come from distinctly different backgrounds, yet their stories bear a remarkable similarity.

We become aware that the thread common to each is each victim's exposure to the same breach of trust carried out by each abuser priest. We watch as the priest groans his remorse, yet his parents by giving both special attention to create the bond of trust. Then, with the trusting permission of the unsuspecting family, the priest turns his victim away from his or her protectors to enable his commission of violent, criminal and inhumane acts against the innocents. As Sipe reminds us from his voice on the telephone, "If it takes a village to raise a child, then it takes a village to abuse one."

Could Sipe be believed? Was it possible that 6 percent of all priests were pedophiles? If so, then there would be 90 pedophile priests in Boston alone. Sipe in the film firmly believed the Globe's readers deserved to know if the "mainstream" Church were to blame for so many victims.

Having interviewed hundreds of men and women survivors of priest sexual abuse, I was brought back to old tears by Spotlight's accuracy and focus. Nearly 14 years have passed since April 2002 when I filed the first priest sexual abuse lawsuit against the Archdiocese of Louisville, yet the memories of hundreds of identical personal tragedies remain an obstacle to my achievement of a personal sense of resolution or peace.

As Phil Saviano explained in Spotlight, many of the victims could not continue to live with the pain of being victimized and resorted to suicide to end their suffering, motivating SNAP to choose "survivor" as the key identifier in its acronym. Spotlight triggered memories that still linger below the surface.

On a national level, Spotlight reminded me of the differences between the role the media played in the Boston cases and the Louisville case. In Boston, neither Garabedian nor McElfish, nor even the Globe, recognized their role in empowering the community of survivors to focus the spotlight on the perpetrators of this horrendous and heinous conspiracy of silence and betrayal. Whether because of the severe stress of the moment or the newness of it all, both lawyers missed an opportunity to allow the "survivors" to create a safe space for others to step into the light and share their stories, and by doing so identify many more abusive priests whose predatory practices had been permitted to persist over decades of Church authority.

By contrast, in Louisville, through their willingness to publicly share their lifelong secret of abuse, these survivors demonstrated the courage others would come to share, as each stepped up to identify yet another abusive priest. It is suggested that it was these courageous Louisville plaintiffs who came forward, along with the coincidental cooperation of an open press, that ultimately led to the identification of 38 abusive priests and one sitting bishop, drawing to a close one part of a story spanning some 50 years in this predominantly Catholic community.

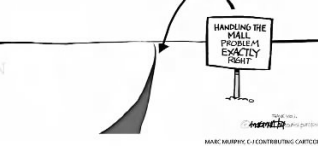
The survivors I have known came to appreciate one essential truth: the healing begins when the child, now an adult, ceases to blame him or herself, standing up with dignity to expose the Church, and stating with conviction, "What happened is not my fault; the Church bears the responsibility for my lifetime of suffering."

Through grace, perhaps Spotlight will bring greater awareness to our communities, ensuring that together we can stop the cycle of childhood sexual abuse. Let the healing begin for us all!

William F. McMurry won a \$25.7 million settlement for 243 victims of sexual abuse in Catholic churches and schools in the Louisville Archdiocese.

### THE THIN BLUE LINE

St. Matthews P.D., Louisville, Ky.



### Rants and raves

**Topic: Key Kentucky legislators on both sides of the aisle say right-to-work is no sure bet to pass in the 2016 session.**  
**John Meley**  
Government should not be in the business of driving wages down and destroying the middle class. Ohio, which barely defeated an anti-worker law in 2011, is now in the 2016 session. Government should not be in the business of driving wages down and destroying the middle class. Ohio, which barely defeated an anti-worker law in 2011, is now in the 2016 session. Government should not be in the business of driving wages down and destroying the middle class. Ohio, which barely defeated an anti-worker law in 2011, is now in the 2016 session.

### READERS' FORUM

#### Right-to-work doesn't attract jobs

Right-to-work has no real impact on where a corporation will move, open a subsidiary or do business with Kentucky. If that were so, we would have lost Toyota and Amazon would not have opened three warehouses in this state. Companies are looking for people with specific skill sets, people who want and need to work and a location where their employees can afford to live while working for them. Unions provide training in many of those skills and mandatory training. My husband has been a part of a union for the majority of his life. He actually gets paid a fair wage for what he contributes with the training he has had and the certifications required to do his job. All because of the union. He has worked non-union jobs and was barely able to support himself. Management bargains for their wages — just in a different way. I wish to see changes to keep the coffee hot so that they could influence votes in the state legislature. Sometimes it is because they will be fired or laid off for just asking. With families to support, that fear is real and collective bargaining becomes a need. If I don't get my raise immediately, I can either wait, knowing that door is open to continue the conversation or I can find a job quick posting when I

#### Are you part of the problem?

If your first response was calling the youth at St. Matthews Mall Saturday night animal, hoodlums or thugs, and not OLR children that we all should be concerned about, then you are part of the problem. If your first response was to call for arrests and a police crackdown instead of understanding what life looks like from the perspective of those young people, then you are a part of the problem. If you accepted without question the media's minimalist reports that what occurred was a riot, knowing that there's how the actions of black youth in groups are always characterized, then you're a part of the problem. If you've consistently made false statements about individual behaviors yet fail to consider the immorality of the aggressive systems that value property over human lives, then you are part of the problem. If you find yourself being critical, make a change.  
**David J. Lott**  
Louisville 40204

### Reports created 'riot that wasn't'

Shame on the CJ and every other news outlet for reporting the outrageous and, apparently, false reports of huge groups of teenagers fighting and "rioting" at the mall. I have yet to see any proof of the rioting and fighting alleged in media, and given that so many youths were alleged to have participated, don't you think just one of those cell-phone-obsessed teenagers would have posted video of the fighting, rioting and shooting? My deacon and his friend were in the mall when this alleged riot took place. Both admit that the mall had an unusual amount of teenagers present, but that neither of them heard gunshots, saw fighting or rioting. In fact, chaos seen on video of individuals running inside and outside the mall is a direct result of police officers yelling at any boy, his friend and customers to "run, get out of here, someone has a gun." Instead of standing around outside, in not so great weather, and wary of a possible gunman lingering around, my son and his friend sought refuge in a public nearby fast food establishment as it, relax, eat, and wait on me and his mother to come get them; but that restaurant suddenly closed, so they, along with many other teenagers) walked across the street to another fast food establishment. It was at this second restaurant where his mother and I retrieved them. Every single person inside the restaurant was behaving — mostly sitting, talk-