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JUSTICE COALITION'S VICTIMS' ADVOCATE

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Children and Violence

By Atty. Jay C. Howell



The United States Department of Justice recently conducted a nationwide survey concerning the incidence and prevalence of children's exposure to violence. The study, conducted between January and May 2008, attempted to measure the past year as well as the lifetime exposure to violence for children age 17 and younger. The categories of crime in the survey were conventional crime, child maltreatment, victimization by peers and siblings, sexual victimization, witnessing an indirect victimization, school violence and threats, and internet victimization. This was the first nationwide attempt to measure a child's exposure to violence in the home, at school, and in the community.

Unfortunately, the survey confirmed that most of our children are exposed to violence in their daily lives. More than 60 percent of the children surveyed were exposed to violence within the past year, either directly or indirectly. "Indirectly" concerns situations where the child was a witness to a violent act, learned about a violent act committed against a family member or close friend, or from a threat against his/her home or school.

Nearly one-half of the children were assaulted at least once in the past year and more than 10 percent were injured in an assault. Almost 25 percent of the children were victims of robbery, vandalism, or theft. More than 10 percent suffered from child maltreatment, including physical abuse, neglect, or family abduction. Over 6 percent were victimized sexually. More than 25 percent witnessed a violent act and nearly one in 10 of the children saw a family member assault another. Multiple victimizations were common: more than a third of the children experienced 2 or more direct victimizations in the previous year.

Nearly one in five girls aged 14 to 17 had been the victim of a sexual assault or attempted sexual assault, and more than one-third of the 14 to 17 year olds had witnessed their parent being assaulted.

Previous research had confirmed that children in the United States are more

CHILDREN... CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Physical and emotional scars; a dream destroyed Collier's assailant sentenced to life in prison without parole

By Shirley Shaw

When he fully awakened in the hospital, Richard Collier didn't know all that was wrong with him. He did know he'd been shot. While sitting in the passenger seat of his vehicle with a friend one night, someone fired at him through the car seat from the open back door. Although he was hit 14 times, he'd felt no pain, actually didn't know he'd been shot until he was in the ambulance.

"I thought maybe I'd be out for a couple of weeks because I felt OK. I felt weird but I could breathe and I felt OK. I never thought it would be that serious. But when I first woke up, I couldn't sit up, do anything. I couldn't have lifted five pounds." And for someone who routinely bench pressed nearly 400 pounds and lifted 700+ in the squat, it was frightening and frustrating. It should have been so simple.

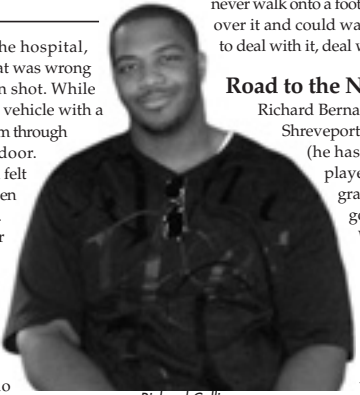
"I felt numb, like I had been lying down forever, and I told my sister (who is a nurse) that I wanted to get up. She started crying and told me my leg had been amputated. It felt like a punch in the gut. I didn't know it was that bad. When I was in the ambulance, I had no idea I wouldn't be able to walk again."

Richard said he didn't ask the doctors much because "I was afraid of what they would tell me. I didn't ask if I'd be able to do this or that. I just wanted to figure it out on my own. When I did ask people around me what was wrong, they said my leg was amputated, that I was paralyzed from the waist down, that I had pneumonia, had all these surgeries, that my kidneys were failing and I'd be on dialysis for a while. So I stopped asking."

But he didn't stop thinking. How could he be in this position? In one split second everything he'd worked so hard to achieve was gone. "There is no way to describe how I felt," he says. "I couldn't stand to watch the games. My friends were out there playing and I was lying in bed knowing I'd

never walk onto a football field again. But eventually I got over it and could watch the games. I told myself I had to deal with it, deal with life, face it and go on."

Road to the NFL



Richard Collier

Richard Bernard Collier was born and reared in Shreveport, Louisiana. One of seven children (he has five sisters and one brother), he played football in high school, but his grades weren't that great, so he didn't go directly to college. He worked at Wal-mart for a couple of years before deciding one day to pursue his dream of playing in the NFL. He talked to the coach at Tyler (Texas) Junior College who gave him the opportunity to play. He weighed 390 pounds and had not lifted a weight since high school, but he quickly got his grades - and body - in shape and worked his way into the starting lineup.

After two years at TJU, Collier transferred to Valdosta State in Georgia where he helped his team win the Division II national championship in 2004 and, as a senior, earned honorable mention All-America and first-team All-Conference. He signed with the Jaguars in 2006 as an undrafted free agent offensive tackle and had played in eight games before his career was abruptly ended.

When questioned about the most exciting moment in his career, he quickly said "making it to the NFL. To actually learn I would be playing professional football was so exciting - something I'd always dreamed of." And the biggest surprise to him was seeing what good players his teammates - and opponents - were. "You come out of college where you have been a pretty good player and you think you're something, but suddenly you're playing with big-name people, and they quickly bring you back down to size."

Richard says you have to earn respect as a rookie, and pay your dues. That includes, among other things, keeping the refrigerator stocked with food and juice, and taking the entire

COLIER... CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



Geoff Youngblood and his staff at Tools for a Time donated \$10,000 to the Justice Coalition to help us continue helping innocent victims of violent crime. We sincerely appreciate the long-time support of this fine organization.



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and your charity - the Justice Coalition - receives a percentage of the proceeds. For more information, see the ad on page 16 of this issue.