

My name is Regina Faye Mad Plume, I am a descendant of the Blackfeet Nation and an enrolled Kootenai member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. My father was Melvin Lee Mad Plume Sr. who attended Ursulines Academy in St. Ignatius, Montana from 1955-1960. He passed away on March 6th, 2020, after a battle with liver cancer. He was the oldest of his brothers and sisters, who also attended Ursulines, he was also a volunteer in the United States Army and was deployed to Vietnam, where he was exposed to Agent Orange. I am giving testimony on his and my behalf.

I support H.R. 5444 the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act for these reasons:

My father, as well as my aunts, uncles and many others who suffered physical, sexual, and emotional abuse by the nuns, sisters, and priests employed by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Helena, aka, the Diocese of Montana. My father was an 8-year-old little boy when his parents, my grandparents, entrusted him in the care, custody, and control of the sisters and priests of the Ursulines Academy in St. Ignatius, Montana. He was also a plaintiff in the John and Jane Does v. Ursulines Sister of the Western Province lawsuit in 2011.

I never asked him about the abuse he suffered while attending Ursulines, because I never wanted my dad to relive those horrible memories, but he did express memories in different ways throughout my life. I did however read into the abuse from the transcripts I attained online after his death. My heart breaks into a million pieces and to this day I still cry when I think of the horrible things that my father endured while attending Ursulines. I think to myself that no amount of money attained from the lawsuit could ever make up for what happened to my dad and others.

Plaintiff John Doe 5 suffered and witnessed acts of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse by Mother Superior Loyola, Sister John, and other members of the Ursuline Sisters of the Western Province. The abuse occurred in Mother Superior's bedroom, in the boys' dormitory, and in other buildings and areas of the Ursulines Academy.

Mother Superior Loyola abused Plaintiff John Doe 3 in the boys' dormitory, in the basement of the boy's dormitory, the boys' bathroom, the church confessional, and other places on the property. Brother Charlie abused John Doe 3 in the basement of the boy's dormitory. Brother Charlie initially fondled Plaintiff's penis but eventually the abuse progressed to forcible acts of oral copulation and repeated acts of anal penetration.

Plaintiff John Doe 8 was subjected to acts of sexual abuse by Brother Rene Gallant, aka, Brother Charlie, and Father Balfe. The sexual abuse perpetrated by Mother Superior Loyola occurred in her bedroom and consisted of forcing Plaintiff to perform oral sex on Mother Superior Loyola and being fondled by her. Brother Rene Gallant, aka, Brother Charlie sodomized John Doe 8 on at least five occasions. Mother Loyola would send John Doe 8 to do chores at Father Balfe's residence, the Jesuit Priest's house behind St. Ignatius Church. On several occasions when performing these chores, Father Balfe would trap John Doe 8 and rape and sodomize him.

Jane Doe 2 was sexually abused by Brother Rene Gallant, aka, Brother Charlie. Brother Charlie fondled Jane Doe 2's vagina causing pain and discomfort. Brother Charlie's abuse caused Jane Doe 2 to develop a bed wetting problem. When Jane Doe 2 would wet her bed. Ursuline Sister Marion would

take Jane Doe 2 and her soiled bedding and make her sit in a bathtub. Sister Marion would rub, fondle, and digitally penetrate Jane Doe 2's vagina while ostensibly praying for Jane Doe 2.

Jane Doe 4 was sexually abused by Father Freddy multiple times. He would place Jane Doe 4 on his lap, hold her tightly, fondle her breasts and vagina, and use her body to masturbate until he ejaculated. On more than one occasion, Father Freddy digitally penetrated Plaintiff Jane Doe 4, while ostensibly praying in Latin. On those occasions, Father Freddy told Jane Doe 4 that he was "praying inside her."

Father Freddy would tell Jane Doe 21 that if she didn't do what he said, "something bad would happen to your family," or "the Lord will be mad."

The individual perpetrators of sexual abuse who preyed upon these children, my father included, were pedophiles and child predators. They used their positions and authority to molest, exploit, and abuse children. Children who were vulnerable under their care, custody, control, and protection.

Survivors lived with shame and developed alcoholism, committed suicide, or different forms of self-destruction. They lived with the memories of punishment, including corporal punishment, solitary confinement, flogging, withholding food, whipping, slapping, cuffing, sexual, and emotional abuse. Sometimes the older kids were made to punish the younger children. Not only were they neglected but forced into performing heavy labor and denied proper medical care. This led to infections and diseases like tuberculosis, the flu, trachoma, and even death. Death seemed like the easy way out for these children, the children that survived lived with years and years of intergenerational trauma passed down to younger generations. I am the next generation of survivors of the boarding school era.

I grew up never hearing "I love you," or getting a hug and kiss every day from my father. He said he was not taught to show love or affection while growing up and attending boarding school. I grew up in a strict home because of his military background and his boarding school experience. I was not allowed to wear the color black or wear a cross, and even clothing that depicted a cross because it reminded him of the nuns and the church. I was baptized Catholic, but never practiced Catholic religion, only baptized so I would not go to hell and only because my mother wanted baptism. Flowers and the smell of flowers reminded my dad of death and the church, so we were never allowed to have fresh flowers. Candles were not allowed in our house, the church used candles and it was another horrible memory for my dad. Oatmeal, my dad learned to love oatmeal, he called it "mush." He said he ate a lot of it while growing up and in boarding school, in turn, that would be my breakfast a lot of the times too. Feelings were never talked about in my family, only anger was only expressed when something happened in the family. You would either get yelled at or whipped when something went wrong. I learned to express my anxiety, stress, sadness, loneliness through anger.

I abused alcohol and looked for love in all the wrong places, always feeling that I was not loved and always feeling empty. I am also a survivor of domestic abuse, thinking dysfunction was love for years. I live with anxiety and a fear of abandonment because my parents' abused alcohol and gambled a lot, sometimes I wouldn't see them all weekend. I grew up having to teach myself how to be a woman, I can't recall my parents teaching me essential skills to take care of myself. Even as a mother, I am learning how to be a mother to my own children. I had to accept the fact that my parents, even my

father, did not know any better. They were never taught to love and show affection, especially my father. He was the head of household and what he said goes.

I have since turned my life around and decided to love myself enough to stop the cycle of intergenerational trauma. Not only for myself, but for my children, so that they can be good human beings and spread love and joy to the world. I tell them every day I love you and give them a hug and kiss when they wake up and when they go to sleep. Even when they go out the door to go play outside. I never want them to feel like they are unloved, I never want them to look for love in all the wrong places. I want to be the parent, my parents weren't, to help them understand their feelings. I want them to talk about what bothers them so I can help them in their daily lives. I am teaching my children to use their voices like I am today, by giving testimony. I am teaching my children the essentials in life and to get their education.

There can be no healing until the effects of boarding school are recognized and addressed. The trauma of shame, fear, and anger will continue to be passed from one generation to the next. It will continue to manifest itself in alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence, and suicide through out Indian country. Once this horrible legacy is admitted, we can finally take the steps to allow for healing for all and for future generations to come. The United States and the Christian church have yet to do more for the Indigenous Peoples that suffer and continue to suffer from the failed institutionalized ignorance of boarding school that were forced onto my father and generations before him.

I support H.R. 5444 the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act for the reasons stated. I would like to thank the Natural Resources Subcommittee for the Indigenous Peoples of the United States for hearing my testimony.

Thank you for your time,

Regina Mad Plume

