



## Book Review

*Homicide Survivors: Misunderstood Grievors* by Judie A. Bucholz, Baywood Publishing Company Inc. 2002.

Reviewed by Kenneth S. Thompson

Sometimes I feel like the little boy in the "Sixth Sense", who saw dead people everywhere but could not communicate that to the people he lived with. Only I see people who are related to murder victims by blood for other ties. Everywhere. I too have a hard time communicating to the people close to me what that experience is like. Except I know its an experience that we all share, since the TV is so insistent in bringing these folks into our houses when they wake us up in the morning with tales of the most recent horror. Right now Lacy Peterson's murder is the top draw.

I feel surrounded by this horror, yet it is rarely talked about. I went through all my years of psychiatric training and the issue was never mentioned, though I certainly met folks who had lost someone due to violence. I was in the Bronx and New Haven, after all. Since moving to Pittsburgh, the pace has continued- and now I many people whose lives were forever changed when someone they knew was murdered.

It was a relief in some odd way to read *Homicide Survivors* - like talking about a taboo subject and giving it the light of day. But it is certainly not an easy read, though its not particularly long, or complex, or badly written. Really, it's an upsetting read - on a number of levels.

The book details what happened to a number of people after a family member was murdered. This includes the author, whose husband was shot several years ago- and whose murderer is still unknown. Each case attempts to build on the prior one, as the author illustrates new issues each case highlights. This is a good idea - to use case stories that build a multi-perspective view of the what happens to the people left behind after a murder allows the author to unfold her message in a way that flows - for the most part. Sometimes, though, like the process of recovery - if that's what learning to live after a murder can be called - the line up of cases is not a linear as the author would like.

Dr. Bucholz is very aware of the vicissitudes of dealing with loss through murder - the loss, the grief, the terror, the isolation, even the suspicion. She describes some of the resources in the community that may help people learn to live again. The book is practical in that understanding the uniqueness of being a homicide survivor (such an odd term, if you think about it) will allow those of us, surrounded as we are by these individuals and families, to finally be able to talk about it with a bit more understanding then we would have without this book.

If I have any concerns about the book it is that it could have benefitted from a greater multi-ethnic perspective, and from some of the

cases being less sensational. I also wish the author had explained where things were in her own case. Too many of the cases involved multi-perpetrator sadistic killings, its impossible to tell how culture and related resources may or may not play into how people learn to live again and it is distressing to be reading a book, not knowing the author but finding her words to conform with your experience- and yet not know for sure that she too, is a victim.

But these drawbacks only heighten the ten-

sion of a tense book and a tense subject. Somebody had to write this book. It's a book about a feeling I hope I only have to watch on TV or read or hear about. Dr. Bucholz, in her own apparent suffering, has tapped into the suffering of isolated others in a forceful and profound way.

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