

Reading 6

Victim Awareness: Reading, Analyzing, and Writing Victim Impact Statements

1. Jane Mosher Victim Impact Statement
2. MADDvocate – A Healing Impact
3. MADDvocate – I Knew Before I Was Told
4. MADDvocate – Shattering of the Soul
5. MADDvocate – Trial and Consequences
6. Madoff Victim Impact Statements - Ronnie Sue & Dominic Ambrosino
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The Honorable Denny Chin
United States District Judge
Daniel Patrick Moynihan
United States Courthouse
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007-1312

June 8, 2009

Dear Judge Chin:

I was always taught to do "the right thing". I called adults "Mr. & Mrs.", I did my homework, I got good grades, I made my bed, and I saved my allowance. We grew up in Levittown, NY and my mom stayed home to raise 3 daughters while Dad went to Brooklyn to work. Each week, as I recall, Dad gave Mom \$5.00 for clothes for us girls. Mom saved it in a small, plastic change purse and when she had saved enough she'd buy an outfit for one girl. Then she saved again until she had enough to buy for the next girl. Seeing this helped me to learn about financial responsibility.

I carried that lesson throughout my life and still live it today. It stayed with me through college, when I saved to buy my first car, when I was married for the first time and saved to buy my first house, when I was newly single and had to adjust from two salaries to one smaller one, and when I found the love of my life, my current husband, and we decided to purchase a motor home to travel the country in our retirement.

I worked and I saved and I reaped the benefits. My life was perfect. Dominic and I woke up every day to a calm world full of adventures for us to explore. We hiked and biked through many of our National Parks. We met people along the way who have become dear friends. We experienced the beauty of our country from the safety of our own rolling home. We were happy and we appreciated the security we had because we did "the right thing".

On Dec. 11th, 2008 I was volunteering my time at a lapidary shop. Dominic was with me as he was using his construction skills to volunteer and build a new table for some equipment in the shop. I was happy to be sharing the time with him—we are best friends as well as husband and wife.

Then I got the phone call that would change our lives forever. I was numb and the reality and enormity of the call couldn't penetrate my brain. I told Dominic and we both just silently completed the tasks we were doing. The air in the room was thick and there was silence. The birds that had been chirping stopped singing. The squirrels stopped scurrying. The sun stopped shining. There was a void.

I had no idea at the time what all this would mean to us. We were retired, with a small income from Dominic's career with the NYC Department of Corrections. Our entire life savings was invested with Bernard Madoff. We actually scrimped and saved to get as much money invested as possible. After all, this was our future and our security. We sold our home in 2004 and placed all the profits (and there were plenty) into Madoff. We took out a mortgage on the motor home because we didn't want to withdraw money from Madoff. We lived a modest life, not wanting for anything, but not overindulging either. We were content.

In the last 6 months our lives have been like something from a bad science fiction movie. The emotional devastation is too intense to be able to describe in words. The safety net that we had worked so hard to ensure was in place was gone and now we're living our lives with no protection. If we get a flat tire, we'd be thrown into a panic. If we need medical assistance, we may have to forsake it. That's not what we worked our entire lives for.

We made decisions that would affect the rest of our lives based on the savings we had with Bernard Madoff. Dominic retired from a career that he can no longer go back to, I sold a business that I can't afford to restart. Our life insurance, Dominic's pension, the selling of our home, our medical insurance – all decisions in these and other areas were based on the safety and security of our investments with BLMIS. Most of these decisions are not able to be reversed or altered. We lived our lives, unknowingly, based on a lie. Now we are forced to live with those decisions that no longer fit in our newly defined financial situation.

We may be some of the fortunate ones. Our lifestyle wasn't that high and our fall wasn't that steep. But, the hardships we're feeling are still overwhelming. I often feel as if life is futile. Why bother to do "the right thing" when it doesn't mean anything?

I haven't cried too many times during this ordeal. I don't have time. I'm trying to rebuild my life and as I do I watch my husband going back to work, leaving at SAM each morning to work in 100+ degree heat. I was hit by a van while attending the March 12th Plea Hearing and was in a cast for 8 weeks. I'm still recovering from that and as such have not been able to work. I did have a job lined up before the accident and now have lost that opportunity. It was a demeaning job, but one I would have had to endure.

Now, I spend an average of 15-18 hours each day coordinating an online group of other Madoff victims. We are searching for justice and to get our lives back.

Judge Chin, I know you're going to receive many letters regarding the sentencing of Mr. Madoff. I know our thoughts will have some input on your decision. I don't know if my letter actually stated my hardship-I fear not. I don't think I could portray the pain, the sinking feeling, the sadness in my heart and the fear of living life on the brink of destitution. Suffice to say that there is no quality of life for us right now. The financial devastation can easily be defined, but the emotional, spiritual and psychological devastation is indescribable. The destruction is insurmountable.

I can use every superlative in the dictionary, but none would suffice to tell you how damaging Madoff's scheme was, not only to those who invested with him, but to the entire country. His actions have changed our financial structure and have hurt us all.

I will ask you to look at the big picture of what happened. I wonder if you ever questioned why Mr. Madoff turned himself in when no one was chasing him? Did he think his manipulative ways would, once again, prevail and that he'd get a lesser sentence for the unthinkable crimes he committed? Did he think, as he sat in his penthouse for 3 months while his victims lost their homes, and worse yet, their lives that he would 'get away with it'? Did Bernard Madoff feel he had so much power that he could influence his attorneys, the prosecutors and the American Justice system and find a way to someday be a free man? I hope not.

Judge Chin, you did "the right thing" when you remanded Mr. Madoff to jail as I sat in your courtroom 3 months ago. I am hoping that you will do the right thing on June 29th when Mr. Madoff again comes to hear his fate and sentence him to the maximum time for the 11 crimes he admitted to committing. I hope that you can show me what my parents taught me so many years ago-that is: to do "The Right Thing".

Thank you.

Ronnie Sue & Dominic Ambrosino