

Injustice in Rotherham

BY NICOLE ZELNIKER
STAFF WRITER

Threatened and terrorized. Helpless and hurting. Angry and alone.

For the past 16 years in Rotherham, England, a Pakistani gang has sexually assaulted over 1,400 young girls.

One of the survivors is 25-year-old Lucy, who finally confessed to her parents at the age of 14 that she had been sexually abused for two years.

"They say it's vulnerable girls these people are after," Lucy's mother said in an interview with The New York Times. "Well, of course they're vulnerable. They're innocent. They're children."

Nor is it just Lucy who has such a horrifying story. "I'd saved all my clothes ... and I gave the police clothes as evidence," said 24-year-old Emma in an interview with the BBC. "They lost the clothes (and) said it was my word against his. The police said they couldn't offer any protection."

According to The New York Times, one girl reported that gang rape was the norm in her neighborhood. Some parents were even charged for wasting police time if they called in about their missing daughters multiple times.

"These were throwaway kids to a lot of people, and that's a shame," said Associate Professor of Political Science Ken Gilmore. "We tend to care about some kids more than others."

Many wonder how this could have gone on for so long without police action.

"The officers were hesitant to (act) toward a group of people of entirely the same race," said Guilford sophomore and Judicial Affairs Steering Chair Molly Anne Marcotte.

Most of the victims also have something in common. "These girls were (mostly) from really poor neighborhoods, foster homes, orphanages or really poor, working class families," said Gilmore. "If it had happened in a rich neighborhood there would have been a lot more stink about it."

Along with racism and classism, the police may have other reasons for wanting to keep these attacks under wraps.

"There are cultural things at play here," said Director of Study Abroad Jack Zerbe. "The British don't air their dirty laundry."

Police did more than just neglect to save hundreds of girls from abuse.

"These girls were often treated with utter contempt," said Lucy's mother, remembering the police referring to Lucy's attackers as her "boyfriends" and the victims as "tarts."

Often, the police would use words like "grooming" to describe what happened to these girls.

"You're brutalizing these women and turning them into a piece of property," said Gilmore. "You're not calling it what it is: it's brutalizing helpless kids who have no one to turn to."

Recently, retaliations by English fascists have led to further complications.

"It isn't a race issue, but Islam is a problem and it needs to be looked at in this society," said Andrew Edge, member of the anti-Islamic English Defense League in an interview with Vice.

According to Unite Against Fascism member Weman Bennett in an interview with The Guardian, these groups are taking advantage of the attacks to promote their own agenda.

"None of those groups ... have got any interest in truly representing people or developing anything inside Rotherham," said Bennett.

Today, the investigation continues. Lucy, after years of struggling with depression and anorexia, has begun to tell her story.

"That shows immense strength on her part," said Marcotte. "In that way, she can prevent these things from happening again."

Blue whale population on the rise, yet facing continued endangerment

BY JULIET MAGOON
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According to the research of Cole Monnohan and Trevor Branch, scientists at the University of Washington's Branch Lab, California blue whales are at 97 percent of previous historic levels.

Their research reveals a rebound for the California blue whale population, while other groups of blue whales are still lagging behind in numbers.

Branch shared his and Monnohan's data of other populations with The Guilfordian via an email interview — the Chilean blue whale population is at seven percent of its historic levels, while the Antarctic population is at a mere one percent.

Through analysis of repeated whale calls in certain areas of the world, Monnohan and Branch computed an estimate of the blue whale's population by calculating a count of whale losses due to whaling.

What, according to Branch, has caused this remarkable recovery?

"The end of whaling," Branch said. "A ban was implemented in 1966, but illegal Soviet whaling continued until 1971. After that, no blue whales were caught in the North Pacific. Stopping whaling allowed them to recover."

"It's good news: if we stop whaling, hunting, fishing, shooting, logging of endangered species, we can usually expect them to recover eventually," said Branch.

If only it were that simple. "It is rubbish to act as if we have a correct estimate," stated Michael Fishbach, co-founder and co-executive director of The Great Whale Conservancy. "We do not know what the population is."

To Fishbach, while the media is reporting a story of success and triumph, many of the details are unsupported.

"The media looked at (Monnohan and Branch's) paper in a way that it was a happy story, when in fact it was a very false story," said Fishbach.

In Fishbach's opinion, there is no precise manner in which we can represent a population of an endangered species whose numbers have not been legally or accurately recorded in history.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, recent studies have revealed discrepancies in Soviet whaling ships' records, meaning far more blue whales were killed historically than previously thought.

"(The Soviet whalers concealed their illegal activities through) altering of reported biological data to camouflage catches of undersized animals or lactating females and over-reporting of legal species to provide credible

catch totals," according to a report by NOAA.

This blatant disregard for international regulation has been called by some marine biologists "arguably one of the greatest environmental crimes of the 20th century," according to Pacific Standard.

Given these discrepancies, it is difficult to determine what the historical population has been. One thing is clear, though. The blue whales' removal has had an important impact on their ecosystem.

Whales produce exceedingly iron-rich waste literally fertilizing the seas. The waste floats to the surface of the ocean, inducing the growth of phytoplankton, according to NPR.

"Their poop is actually circulating nutrients around the ocean," said Fishbach. "You don't just pluck life from an ecosystem and not expect change."

Seven of the 13 Great Whale species are endangered or vulnerable, along with 16,938 other known species globally, according to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services.

"It's time to get serious," said Fishbach. "Listen to the people who work the closest with these animals." In order to help, we must ask how we can help.

Although the fight for whales may not be as rosy as Monnohan and Branch's study suggests, their population has recovered somewhat.

Factors such as the Marine Mammal Protection Act implemented in 1972 — a halt to large-scale commercial salt evaporation plants as well as an end to low frequency active sonar waves being utilized by the Navy — have all helped the whale populations to increase.

"Recovery for some of our local endangered species works similarly in this sense," said Megan White, assistant professor of biology. "If we don't have regulations to protect them, which is one thing that has helped the whales, it makes it significantly more

difficult to support them."

So what can we do from here?

"We need to make it our responsibility to help," Fishbach said. "Have compassion, understand their plight and go to them. Give these animals rights to life."

Feet vs. Flippers

This to-scale image shows an average human next to an average blue whale.



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Russia-Ukraine conflict exacerbated by cease-fire violation

BY REESE SETZER
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Less than 48 hours after a cease-fire was declared between the Ukraine and Russian-backed rebels, loud booms were heard in the port city of Mariupol as well as in Donetsk.

The cease-fire was agreed upon at talks between representatives of Ukraine, the rebels, Russia and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, even though there were some details that were not clear.

These included aspects of control and prisoner exchange.

"Obviously it was a situation where the both sides have strong feelings against the opposition," said sophomore Ben Winstead, a political science major. "And while I hope the cease-fire helps work to solving the issue, I won't be surprised if it doesn't

given the history of the parties involved."

Though the truce appeared to be holding for the first couple of days, both sides have been accusing one another of violating it. Since it began, four Ukrainian soldiers have been killed and 29 others have been injured.

There have been some isolated reports in both Mariupol and in Donetsk of shelling and gunfire. Both reported artillery fire, and there has been one confirmation of a civilian casualty in Mariupol.

Since the incidents in Mariupol and Donetsk, however, there have been no further reports of violations of the cease-fire. It may be only a matter of time before fighting starts back up, though.

"Both sides needed time to regroup, rearm and get ready for the next round," said Robert Duncan, assistant professor of political science. "Until one side is in full control, they're going to continue to do that until one side stops."

As far as a solution, it may be only a matter of time before NATO gets involved. Until then, it does not seem much is going to be resolved.

"The only way the (Russian-Ukrainian conflict) could be resolved is if NATO stepped in to assist the Ukrainians," said Duncan. "Unless they step in, nothing is going to happen."

NATO has met as recently as Aug. 31, according to CNN reports. There is talk of increased military support for Ukraine against Russia, but at this time, that seems much too risky.

"It is best not to mess with Russia," said Russian President Vladimir Putin in a speech in late August. "Let me remind you, we are a nuclear superpower."

Until NATO intervention, the countries' leaders will have to stay in contact. Both Putin and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko have spoken in regards to how

long the cease-fire will last. But as of right now, that solution remains unclear.

"Putin is a hard one to read regarding the entire conflict," said Jeremy Rinker, assistant professor of peace and conflict studies.

"I think Putin's goal, at this juncture, is to weaken the Ukrainian government and thus gain additional concessions," said Ken Gilmore, associate professor of political science in an email interview. "The cease-fire comes at a time when Russian forces have accomplished as much as they can without a full-scale invasion."

Some Ukrainian officials also believe that the Russian government wants to extend Russian territory as far west as the country's capital Kiev, which is in the center of Ukraine.

Whatever Putin's goals are for the region, there is no reason to think the fighting will stop until those goals are accomplished.