

Will Lynch

INTRO

Will Lynch is the Founder and Executive Director of **RISE** – Roots for Individual & Social Empowerment. He is an advocate who is committed to ending the cycle of sexual abuse against children worldwide. He works to strengthen individuals and communities by developing seminars, workshops, and other learning opportunities that serve the cause. Will possesses an MBA in International Business and brings a diverse range of approaches to the work of **RISE**, drawing on the latest research, theory, and educational models.

INCIDENT

Will is a survivor of child sexual assault. He shares how at the age of seven he was brutally raped, tortured and strangled at the hands of Father Jerold Lindner, a Catholic priest. Life, as Will knew it, ended that day. This incident became a frozen moment in time and lives forever in the words of Lindner, “You are no longer a child of God, and I will skin your sister alive and kill your family if you ever tell.” Like a textbook case of child sexual abuse, Will told no one.

ODYSSEY

Never able to tell his story or reveal the source of his pain, Will descended into decades of darkness and despair. When the truth surfaced 20 years later, Will was informed that the statutes of limitations for criminal prosecution had expired, leaving the priest free to molest other children with impunity. Although Will’s case failed to bring Lindner to justice, he remained resolute. Over the next 15 years, in the course of finding numerous subsequent victims, Will was able to expose Lindner as a serial pedophile.

ACTION

After exhausting every legal remedy to bring Lindner to justice and prevent other children from suffering the same fate, Will took matters into his own hands. He confronted the priest who was living unrestricted in the Sacred Heart Jesuit Center, an upscale Catholic retirement community in Los Gatos, California. Their conversation escalated, a physical altercation ensued, and Will was arrested and charged with felony assault and felony elder abuse. The trial (State of CA vs. William Lynch) commenced two years later on June 20, 2012.

OUTCOME

If convicted, Will faced the possibility of four years in prison. He was offered multiple plea deals, including probation, which he refused. Unlike Lindner and the Catholic Church, Will was prepared to face justice and risk his liberty to tell his story. During the trial, Will took the stand, told the truth and acknowledged responsibility for his actions. And In a landmark victory and contrary to the law, the jury acquitted Will of all charges. The jury nullification was an extraordinary and unexpected outcome.

REVELATION

Will's trial brought international media attention to the issue of child sexual abuse. It exposed a profoundly flawed judicial system that protects pedophiles and the institutions that harbor them, more than those at risk and the survivors whose lives are irreparably harmed. Through this experience Will was able to find his voice, become empowered and begin the long, slow process of taking back his life.

FORMULATION

The media attention surrounding Will's story inspired other victims to come forward and share their stories. The outpouring of support affirmed to Will that the system was broken and something had to change. With a deep conviction to protect children and ensure that no other survivor would suffer the additional indignation and victimization of the judicial system, Will founded the non-profit organization, **RISE** – Roots for Individual & Social Empowerment. One of his goals is to provide survivors with the opportunity to find their voice, become empowered, and begin to take back their lives; but in a way that is safe and productive.

INNOVATION

Will is not interested in changing the legal system from within. If that could be done, it already would be. The current system is entrenched in politics and favors those who bring the greatest influence to bear. If nothing changes, institutions will continue to dominate the system in order to protect their assets to the detriment of society; and society will remain uninformed, disinterested, compliant, and resigned at the effect of a skewed system.

Will is interested in implementing a radical solution that supplants the institutional power structure by leveraging the collective will of the people. Through **RISE**, Will has carefully crafted an innovative and comprehensive model that clears the past while putting measures in place to protect children in the future. Not only is this model viable, it can be reliably delivered across a broad spectrum of social issues.

TRANSFORMATION

Will plans to transform the issue such that:

- Humanity declares zero tolerance towards sexual abuse against children.
- Individuals are empowered to protect those at risk.
- Survivors are free to seek justice in their own right, in their own way, and in their own time.

Will is not seeking agreement he is demanding action to protect children who are at risk *today*.

Tempered irreverence, collective morality, shared urgency and common sense are the guiding principles here. All movements begin with one person saying and doing something different, something extraordinary. The success of said movements are manifested in the collective will of the people and through a plan that is viable and actionable. Will's vision will powerfully call people into committed action to transform this issue *here and now*.

Ending the cycle of sexual abuse against children is a unique challenge *and our greatest opportunity*.

The issue may seem bigger than all of us; *but it is not beyond each of us to do what we know is morally right*.

EPILOGUE

Will's story is one of savage perpetration, hard-fought redemption and a promise for the future.