

NEWS

VICTIMS LEARN KID-SEX FIEND SERVED NO TIME; NIGHTMARE LINGERS FOR KID-SEX VICTIMS; EXCLUSIVE

By [Douglas Montero](#)

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MICHAEL vividly remembers the knife pressed against his throat.

He was 11, face down in bed at an upstate summer camp for Jewish orphans, when his partially clad counselor mounted him and threatened to kill him if he screamed.

“I was telling him to stop because it really hurt,” said Michael, now 19.

For nearly two months, between games, outdoor activities and Orthodox religious observances, Michael would return to the horror of his cottage and forced sex with the 24-year-old man, he recalled.

Michael said he saw the same counselor sexually abuse his roommate and best friend, Robert, also 11 at the time.

Robert remembers vague abuse, but not specific acts.

Along with Michael, he claims the attacks continued at the Ohel Children’s Home and Family Service Group Home in Borough Park, Brooklyn.

Michael and Robert say their complaints to other staffers were ignored for a year, until a worker caught the counselor straddling Michael.

Police were called and Michael remembers telling sex-crimes investigators in June 1992 that he wanted “justice.”

The two boys hid the scars of the abuse for nine years. And then, last month, they discovered what had happened to their attacker:

He walked.

Simcha Adler, now 33, plea-bargained charges of sodomy, sexual abuse and two counts of endangering the welfare of a child down to attempted sodomy, court records show.

His punishment: five years’ probation and psychological counseling.

“It’s a crime that he could walk away ... and have a normal life,” said Michael, now a mailroom worker in Midtown. “This man ruined my life.”

Robert vaguely remembers Ohel workers telling him that Adler had been given probation.

“I was [angry], but I couldn’t do anything – I wasn’t smart enough to do anything,” said Robert, now a City College freshman who wants to be an optometrist.

“He should be in jail for the rest of his life,” said Robert, who was placed in Ohel because he was sexually abused by his mother.

Michael and Robert have contacted lawyers to find out if they can properly punish Adler. They also want to know if Ohel – their legal guardian – can be held accountable for failing to vigorously nail the pedophile to a prison cell wall.

Although the statute of limitations for suing is three years, the countdown didn’t begin until they turned 18.

Adler was arrested on June 22, 1992, and released on \$2,000 bail, then plea-bargained his way to freedom on Aug. 12 – less than two

months later.

Ohel should have screamed murder, but it didn't.

Ohel fired Adler in May 1992, after two years of employment, but agency officials wouldn't say whether his termination stemmed from the sexual abuse.

Adler was charged with entering Robert's room and sexually molesting him.

"I could feel him coming before he even got in to my room," Robert said. "I knew what was going on, and I would fall asleep – I guess I was in shock ... Then I would wake up again and realize he was still on top of me."

Adler also was charged with fondling Michael in the shower.

"The counselors would take the kids to the showers and they [the kids] would bathe in their shorts," Michael recalled. "He [Adler] always made me take my shorts off."

"I couldn't sleep at night because I didn't know when he would walk into my room."

Michael and Robert angrily charge Ohel swept the abuse "under the rug" to avoid a legal battle that might ruin its reputation.

A former Ohel employee told The Post the boys' allegations were not taken seriously or investigated by Ohel because Michael was thought to be a "liar."

Ohel spokesman Gerald McKelvey would not respond to the ex-employee's comments. "Because of confidentiality concerns, Ohel cannot comment directly on previous or former clients," he said.

But Ohel has a history of turning a blind eye to sexual abuse.

Now-retired sex-crimes Detective Sal Catafumo recently told The Post that his 1984 investigation of a bogus Borough Park rabbi who had reportedly molested "hundreds" of children – including some Ohel orphans – while working as a child counselor got nowhere when cops tried to question the agency.

"They weren't cooperating," Catafumo said. "Kids ... had complained to Ohel and it was swept under the rug ... [and] never reported ..."

The rabbi was indicted, but he fled to Israel.

McKelvey and Ohel CEO David Mandel deny that the agency ignored kids' complaints about both Adler and the fake rabbi.

McKelvey dismissed Catafumo's claims as "absolutely false," and said Ohel "cooperated fully with authorities in the matter and was deeply involved in the treatment of the victims in this case."

In general, said Mandel, "any allegations made by anyone are taken very seriously and are investigated."

The psychological trauma of the yearlong series of attacks is apparent in both Michael and Robert, who still live in Ohel housing because they don't have money, parents or any place to go.

Robert said he's never dated a girl because he wanted to focus on school. He spent the past summer watching TV and playing video games.

Asked if the sexual attacks might have something to do with his fear of dating, he said, "I don't know – I never thought about it like that."

Robert takes a battery of prescription drugs to deal with his attention-deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) and a mood disorder.

Michael admitted he began seducing other orphaned boys at 14. A heterosexual, he says he is aroused by rape scenes. Medical records show he also suffers from ADHD and mood disorders.

The owner of a Borough Park building where Adler, until recently, had been living told The Post that the former counselor – who married in December and moved to Jerusalem – admitted to her several years ago that he was a pedophile.

She said his confession came after Ohel officials knocked on her door and told her to keep an eye on her children.

“He [Adler] told me he was sexually abused [as a child],” said the woman, who requested anonymity.

Adler was sent to Ohel at age 3 after his mother died, said his foster mother, Barbara Ackerman, who added that he underwent extensive therapy following his arrest.

“Once it was brought to our attention, we watched him,” she said. “He dealt with it and he handled it ... He is doing well.”

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