

## Victim Impact Statement from Patricia Hung, Stefanie Rengel's Mother (Page One)

Your Honour,

There are many moral lessons we learn growing up, but none is more primordial than knowing that killing is wrong. If by 15 years old, that basic moral principle has not been learned, and something as transient and fickle as teenage jealousy can elicit murder, as though this were a crime of little consequence, then no amount of maturing or rehabilitation is going to instill that principle.

I find myself trying to put into words the impact of losing my only daughter to murder. For us of course, no punishment would ever be severe enough, but we are not blind to the issues at hand and do not envy the court's position. The local and national media coverage will not only call attention to the court's decision but also focus its eye on my very painful and private feelings. Many of my internal battles and fears embarrass and shame me, which makes publicizing my private hell so difficult and goes against the very nature of my being. Writing this has been an almost insurmountable task.

This is the very last thing that I can do for my daughter, but my ability and need to impress upon the court how utterly devastating it is to lose a child to murder eludes me. There simply are no words to accurately describe the pain and heartache associated with the loss of a child.

To face my child's death is one thing but to have to live with the memory of the violence associated with it is unbearable and ever present. Stefanie left the safety of our home in happy innocence, completely oblivious to the danger that awaited her. She ran outside for what she told her brother would just be a minute, without a coat, on one of the coldest days of the winter, with 4ft high snow banks and slippery ice underfoot. At the slightest chill, I am instantly reminded and imagine over and over, her last moments. Freezing, in an agony of pain, shock and terror, bleeding from 6 separate stab wounds, drowning in her own blood as her lungs filled up, suffocating, gasping for air with no one but a stranger to offer her what help he could. She died with no one she loved to hold her, reassure her, comfort her. She would have been so scared and desperate to get to her home that she could see just steps away, but despite her best efforts, she collapsed in a snow bank, growing colder by the second, unable to call for help. Memories of how she died haunt me everyday and those memories are engraved on my soul and will be with me forever until I am blissfully no more.

Losing a child at any age, is unnatural. They are supposed to outlive us. But losing a teenager has to be one of the hardest times. It is the most challenging time for parents, when saying "no" seems to be a big part of most discussions, at least for those of us who truly care. The natural separation of parent and child (especially a first child) for me was heart wrenching enough and I longed for her to be a bit older and having that love grow into friendship on an adult level. Stefanie was such an awesome person. I looked forward to the day when I could enjoy her adult company, relieved of my parental responsibilities, to just enjoy as a person. She was so smart and so funny, and now that's been stolen from me.

Also stolen from me is my ability to remember her the way I should be able to. If I let myself remember her smile or the way she came into my room and said "I'm home" after being dropped off from babysitting late at night, or the way she played with her brothers and her natural infectious laugh, or her ability to banter back and forth with the wittiest of people and hold her ground, --breaks my heart. I just can't go there. I can't watch videos of her or even speak about her in any depth for fear I will lose control of myself and tumble so far down into the depths of despair I won't be able to pull myself out.

I have wanted so many times to not be alive, to stab myself and feel exactly what she felt, an incomprehensible need to experience her pain. But we have other children and other responsibilities, and so I go. I work so hard to keep life happy and normal for our three sons, but the scars are forever etched in their lives. Ian, now 13, has begun his own metamorphosis into adulthood and misses his big sister more than ever. Ian should be able to share his secrets with her and have support through the trials and tribulations of adolescence as he fully expected to have. He has distanced himself from me, afraid to show me his grief for fear I'll be unable to be strong for him. It's embarrassing and

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uncomfortable for him to see his mother in a weak and emotional state and I know this because I have the same feelings with my own mother. She and I both need our children to lean on us, but as children, both Ian and I want to protect our parents because they have already suffered enough. Such a difficult balance to manage as an adult, never mind as a teenager.

Each night, as a family, we give thanks for one thing that has happened in that day. Inevitably, my 6 year old is "thankful that we all made it safely through the day". He is plagued by night terrors and worries about all of us, a sad situation for an otherwise delightful six-year-old little boy.

As for me, I am afraid. That may sound simple and even reasonable considering the trauma we've suffered, but in fact it's multifaceted and devastating. I am forever changed. It's embarrassing to admit that at times I'm paralyzed with fear. I wake each night, at least once, in the most indescribable state of terror, which emanates from my chest to my limbs and into every one of my nerve endings. I have constant nightmares of horrible acts committed against Stefanie and the boys. I am unable to sleep properly and too scared to take medication to sleep for fear someone will break into our house and I'll be too medicated to protect my family. I have lost my general sense of security on a daily basis, I worry each time I am separated from them and prepare mentally for the worst. I am unable to go out at night alone and force myself to walk unaccompanied in my own neighbourhood. Television has become a mine field, where even the most seemingly innocent of programs can suddenly have a knife scene that rips at my fragile composure.

How could I ever explain the ramifications of this on my career. Simply, I don't have one and that has also been stolen from me. I used to love my job and was proud of my work, and now I don't know how I'm going to ever do it again, because simply, I'm afraid.

Knowing that I did not do enough to protect Stefanie from these monsters eats at my sanity every waking moment. I can't forgive myself for not doing more and don't know how to live with it. I can't relax when the boys are away from me, and I panic at the slightest hint of danger. I used to feel real joy in even the most banal occasions, as when the six of us were driving to my parents' farm, and now I only feel relief that we are together, momentarily safe and deeply sad because Stefanie is missing. The joy is gone.

The senseless murder of a beautiful and innocent young girl brings with it more than just grief and devastation, it steals one's anonymity and re-victimizes a family. The trial process has been unbelievably difficult, an emotional rollercoaster that has yet to end. And to make matters worse, I was subjected to the unbelievable insensitivity of a defense attorney who boasted about "just loving an audience" when I was on the stand waiting for the jury to come in and cross-examination to begin. As if sitting only feet away from the person who killed my daughter and having to be civilized wasn't asking enough, I guess he thought he would have a little fun at my expense.

The rage that burns inside me is a formidable opponent I battle every day. I want to scream at the top of my lungs, want to stop pretending all the time, stop having to just get by, and I want to know happiness again. I want to stop over-reacting when I feel like an injustice has been committed against anyone I care about. I want inner peace, which is believed to come from forgiveness, but I am unable to forgive someone who has shown no remorse. [REDACTED] insists that she didn't think that [REDACTED] would actually kill Stefanie but instead of being horrified when he did, she asked him to re-enact the crime, then have a little sex and then call her mummy for a celebratory latte. This is the most revealing glimpse into who she is and the danger she poses. How does one forgive that?

I honestly believe that Stefanie's death, this trial and the conviction has saved other unsuspecting families the brutal reality that is now ours, at least for a little while. I am so proud of who Stefanie was. Strong, honest, warm, kind and generous, she was a young lady who knew right from wrong. She would have been a productive, caring member of society with so much to offer. Not only have we lost our daughter, but society has lost all the good that she would have done in her lifetime.

All that's left for us is to find a way to go on.

## Victim Impact Statement from Mary Fraser, Stefanie Rengel's Grandmother

Your Honour,

My name is Mary Fraser. My husband, Ian, and I are Stefanie's maternal grandparents. Stefanie was our first beloved grandchild and we watched her grow into a sweet, caring, responsible young person with an irrepressible sense of humour and a strong set of values. We miss her with aching hearts every day of our lives.

We live with the resultant grief, nightmares and health issues common enough, I suppose, after this kind of tragedy, but surmounting this is the pain we feel for our daughter, Patricia. There is little more hurtful for parents than being helpless to take away a son or daughter's anguish. Patti's strength amazes us, as she goes about her daily life, intent on maintaining a happy home for her remaining children. Only a few days after Stefanie was so savagely killed, her mother was called to testify at a murder case involving another innocent child, and she forced herself to go, hoping her testimony would help bring some sort of justice for the small, innocent victim. We are proud of our daughter, but we know the suffering beneath the façade. We worry about her, feel her pain, but have no answers, except prayer.

Our hearts ache, also, for our grandson, Ian, and for the impact this has had on all our family and Adolfo's. We gather together often for family celebrations and life goes on, but one of us is missing, and it will never be the same. How do we ever erase the memory of our remaining young grandchildren whispering their last good-byes to Stefanie before the coffin lid was closed forever?

Stefanie lived in a peaceful, friendly neighbourhood. She went to safe schools, volunteered cheerfully in her community, taught Sunday School at the church she loved and, aside from a brief acquaintance with ██████, had lovely friends from good homes. She would have grown up to be what, in many respects, she was already, an enthusiastic, compassionate, contributing member of society.

Instead, our beloved granddaughter is dead, at fourteen, our family, diminished, our secure world shattered and our peace plagued by questions that have no answers.

There is no doubt that ██████ family is also suffering in ways we can only imagine, and we are truly sorry for that, yet in spite of the fact that ██████ appears to have been raised in a loving home, she has managed, somehow, to reach the age of seventeen without the slightest regard for the intrinsic value of human life. Narcissistic, with a "so what?" attitude, her coldness is frightening, more so because she represents a growing number in the insular world of today's youth, who learn quickly, from the cradle, that the young are seldom required to suffer the consequences of their actions.

Throughout the course of this trial ██████ has been given every possible courtesy, respect and concession. Yet, when she decided, for her own imagined reasons, that Stefanie was getting in the way of her happiness, the decision was made and the sentence, carried out. There was no trial for Stefanie, no jury, no judge, no solicitous defense, no careful weighing of evidence, no concessions because of her youth, no pity, no six-hour long closing argument, no new chance at life...just a brutal, calculated, cold-blooded execution, and afterwards, a bizarre re-enactment and a sexual reward, freely given, for a job well done. God help us all.

## **Victim Impact Statement from Ian Rengel, Stefanie Rengel's Brother**

It has been really hard not having my big sister Stefanie around. I wish that she could be here with us but she can't because of [REDACTED] who is responsible for killing her. I wish she could see how much I have grown up and matured.

Everything is so much harder now that she's gone. I don't know who I can trust and I don't feel safe at night not even in my neighbourhood. I have trouble sleeping and everything reminds me of her. Every single day I think about her and the pain she must have felt when she was stabbed. I blame myself about not going outside, not hearing her cry or calling for help. Why didn't I look out and see her dying in the snow, I could have told her I loved her and that everything was going to be fine if she could just hold on a little longer. I don't understand how someone could do this to someone so nice. I'm not the same person as before and I just want life to go back to normal. I hurt the way no one should ever have to hurt and then I think that it's nothing compared to what Stefanie suffered.

My little brother Eric who is 6 is scared so easily now. He worries every time I leave the house and feels panicked until I get home. He missed Stefanie, and Patrick who's 3 doesn't remember her and only talks about her in heaven. He is angry in his own way. She was stolen from us and now life sucks. I go to high school in September and I don't know who to trust, who to fear, who to make friends with so I probably just won't. I can't trust anybody.

The people who did this should have to remember what they did for the rest of their lives and be held accountable as much as possible because they took my awesome big sister away and they made so many people suffer. I love her so much and I'm so sad that she's gone forever.

## **Victim Impact Statement from Adolfo Rengel, Stefanie Rengel's Father**

I would like to apologize to my son Ian for not having the strength to read these few words to the court, I have asked my best friend Alan Clark to do it for me. Thanks

June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1993 Stefanie was born, one of the happiest days in my life. I still can see Stefanie smiling at me when she first saw me within a few minutes of her life. January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 was the worst day in my life.

There are no words to describe the pain I felt when I learned Stefanie was dead. Nobody knows how I feel, the anger and hatred I have for the people who took Stefanie away from our family. They didn't just take Stefanie's life; they have ruined the lives of her family and closest friends.

It's very hard to write this impact statement without wondering, what's going to be the outcome of this proceeding for one of the two people who decided Stefanie had to die; they took her bright promising future, the big sister to all her siblings, my first daughter. One day they will be able to continue on with their lives, Stefanie will not have the same opportunity. Our lives are changed for forever; birthdays, Christmas, and New Years will never be the same. We no longer have Stefanie around to create new memories with, only have the past to remember her through.

December 24<sup>th</sup> was the last time I saw Stefanie alive, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 12 o'clock the last time I heard her voice, I miss her so much and all I can do is hope one night when I go to sleep I'll be able to see her again.

I hope something positive will be gain by my lost.

Adolfo Rengel