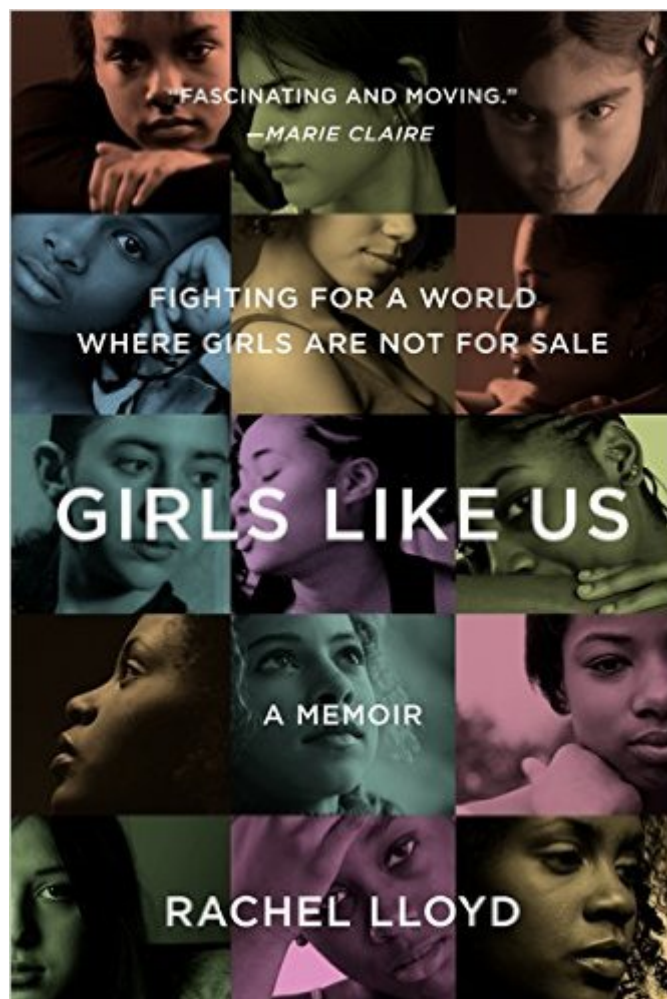


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Girls Like Us: Fighting For A World Where Girls Are Not For Sale: A Memoir



Synopsis

"Powerfully raw, deeply moving, and utterly authentic. Rachel Lloyd has turned a personal atrocity into triumph and is nothing less than a true hero. . . . Never again will you look at young girls on the street as one of 'those' women "you will only see little girls that are girls just like us."

â "Demi Moore, actress and activist" With the power and verity of *First They Killed My Father* and *A Long Way Gone*, Rachel Lloyd's riveting survivor story is the true tale of her hard-won escape from the commercial sex industry and her bold founding of GEMS, New York City's Girls Education and Mentoring Service, to help countless other young girls escape "the life." Lloyd's unflinchingly honest memoir is a powerful and unforgettable story of inhuman abuse, enduring hope, and the promise of redemption.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What is the difference between a teenage prostitute and a commercial sexually exploited teenage girl? You will learn this when you read this book by an author who has been there, done that, suffered through it and yet managed to turn her life around. Thereafter she established an organization in New York called GEMS, acronym for Girls Educational and Mentoring Service, a safe house for commercially sexually exploited teenage girls. The author, Rachel, was the daughter of an unstable, poor mother and Robert, a man who may or may not have been her father, but who physically abused both her mother and her, finally abandoning them. Unable to face his desertion, Rachel's mother, already a drunk became immobilized in liquor and depression, totally ignoring

Rachel as there was no room in her life from then on for her daughter. Rachel was glad the man was gone for he beat on her often. Rachel spent little or no time at home, meeting her needs through shoplifting and running with her peers. However, in Rachel's earlier years, her mother had been loving and took care of her. This gave Rachel a foundation when she was out of her teens to straighten out her own life and become what she now is. However, when thirteen, needing and seeking love and protection, she fell into the same trap that other teenage girls, ages generally from twelve to eighteen do. She met a suave man who took her to dinner, spoke softly and gently to her, made her believe he cared about her and then took her to his room and introduced her to sex. This man became her family, her Daddy, the only one who loved her and cared about her, but as time passed, he beat her up often for not enticing more johns more quickly, earning more money, explicitly following orders or just because he was in the mood to make her suffer. 1997 was the end of the crack era. The idea is out there that most of these girls are drug addicted, but they are not. They are "love" addicted. Their desire for love is so great that they, in their youth and innocence, believe a kindness extended to them by their boyfriend (their pimp) is love, which keeps them under control and causes them to tolerate beatings, torture and murder, in some instances. More Black and Latino girls than White girls suffer from poverty, physical and sexual abuse within their families in their young lives, which make more of them susceptible to being out on the streets under the control of pimps. From the author's own words, "The gang culture replicated the family unit for children who found their support systems in the street. The desire for a family is so strong and so overpowering for most children that it doesn't take much to create that illusion. Pimps play upon this desire by creating a pseudo-family structure of girls who are your "wives-in-law" headed up by a man you call Daddy. The lessons that girls have been taught, implicitly and explicitly, about family and relationship dynamics are all fuel for the exploiters' fire. The greater their need for attention and love, the easier it is to recruit them.... Growing up with an alcoholic or drug addicted parent sets the stage for caretaking and codependency patterns that are helpful in making girls feel responsible for taking care of their pimp." Girls who had non-existent fathers or abusive relationships with fathers are easily drawn to a pimp who calls himself Daddy. Throughout the book, Rachel gives many case histories of girls whom she has either rescued or attempted to rescue through the organization of GEMS. She describes almost every type of situation that exists. She also alerts the reader that most, but not all policeman, consider these teenagers to be prostitutes rather than victims forced into sex and thus are not sympathetic to their needs when they are either arrested on the street or are found beat up or try to complain about violence against them. She explains the differences between pedophiles, pimps and johns. Rachel's experiences and case histories are generally in the

New York City area, but acknowledges that the same conditions are prevalent in other large metropolitan areas. Social and governmental policies have been particularly destructive to children in the sense that children in poor neighborhoods frequently receive a substandard education, are subjected to lead paint in poorly constructed buildings, have higher rates of asthma, and fewer recreational or green spaces where entire neighborhoods have been abandoned. Children born into these conditions are more susceptible to the dangers of commercially sexually exploited teenagers. Children are vulnerable because they are children; their hormones are raging; they desire to belong; they are subjected to confusing messages about sex and love; and with the usual desire of teenagers to be independent, thus are ripe for plucking by pimps who understand the needs of these female children for love and can skillfully manipulate them into being forced or coerced into being sold for sex. Throughout the book, Rachel gives flashbacks of her life on the streets, her experiences with her boyfriend pimps and it was after she almost died from a beating by a pimp boyfriend, that she had an epiphany and joined a church, which became her salvation. Thereafter she finished her GED, attended college and set up GEMS with the help of others. But she also makes it clear that through the years in dealing with government officials, that often something is said that is disrespectful to her as a woman because she has never denied her background, which, has been to her advantage when trying to help these unfortunate girls who know she understands their plight and condition. The book flows well, reads well and is highly instructive. I would recommend this book even as a text book for anyone who is a social worker, politician, law enforcement officer or even a foster home provider. It gives an entirely different viewpoint about teenage girls thought of as teen prostitutes and of teen children whose lives have thrown them into this den of lions.

Girls Like Us is a book that is at times tragic, poignant, even funny - but always incredibly powerful. It should be required reading for everyone. Through the author's willingness to be utterly transparent, we are shown a world in which young girls are denied the opportunity to be children; where grown men participate in and profit from the commercial sexual exploitation of thousands of little girls. It's a world where minors are prosecuted as adults for crimes of which they are the real victim, and the people they should be able to count on to protect them are quite often the very ones who destroy them. Our culture has an incredibly twisted view of the "sex industry". In Girls Like Us we read about girls like Sienna, who is beaten and left for dead by the side of the road by a man who "purchased" her for sex - and in the hospital she is put in a room with a Little Mermaid curtain, because that's standard in a child's room. And Sienna is a child. There were times, while reading this

book, that I almost felt overwhelmed and completely discouraged. Times when I had to stop reading because I was crying so hard. But Rachel Lloyd never gives up, and through her writing we eventually feel the same sense of empowerment - the sense of the incredible potential of these girls. The message is clear: if this tragic exploitation is ever going to stop, we have to stand up and do something. And she gives us tools and ideas for action that anyone can accomplish. Simply knowing it is happening makes us responsible to do whatever we can to help these children who so desperately need love and understanding and safety. I really can't say enough about the importance of this subject. It is very disturbing and completely heartbreaking, but Ms. Lloyd manages with grace and courage to open our eyes.

I hesitated to read this book because I am a survivor of sex abuse and the mother of a small child. I feared that the book might send me into depression. Amazingly, Ms. Lloyd's story provokes not only disgust, rage, and sadness, but also hope. Thank you, Ms. Lloyd, for your dedication to these girls.

Girls Like Us is both the best memoir and the best general introduction about commercial sexual exploitation of children ever written. Despite being a ground-breaking exploration of the darkest corner of our society, Girls Like Us is filled with hope, entertaining insight, and humor. It is really great -- an Erin Brockovitch for the new decade.

I received this book as a sample to read through Vine Voice. In Girls Like Us, Rachel Lloyd doesn't just write a memoir, she writes an expose about the child sex exploitation "industry." Each chapter focuses on a different aspect of the sex industry - Family, Pimp, Johns, Recruitment, etc, and tells it from the point of view of her girls and her own experience. This book is an educational tool that would be great for college classes in trauma, child psychology, social work, or any other mental health or social injustice field. It gives people a different perspective on the topic. By the end of the book, the reader understands that there are many socio-economic and familial factors that affect the paths that people take. Unfortunately, in Girls Like Us, young girls have serious adult decisions to make and are manipulated into making them. I will be honest: This is a heavy topic. It's like reading an unedited, uncensored episode of Law & Order: SVU. It's a great book and worth reading, but you must take your time.

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