

In Darkness Light Dawns:

Exposing Workplace
Bullying

Lisa M.S. Barrow, DM



Port Colborne

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*Speak up for those
who cannot speak for themselves.*

—PROVERBS 31:8

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Part I

*My
Workplace
Bullying
Story*



Welcome to My World... And to this Book

**I've stared hostility in the face. I know
how it affects people emotionally,
socially, mentally and physically.**

I am six years old. Tears are streaming down my mother's face and horror fills her eyes as images of violence—of people being fire-hosed and brutally beaten—appear on TV. My father sits quietly as if the impact of what he is seeing has stolen his capacity to respond.

We are watching NBC news coverage during the 1960s in our humble two-story farmhouse in upstate New York. I know something awful is going on and for a few moments, worry that the same thing could happen to us. After all, aren't we the same color as the people who are being attacked?

Then I think of my friends, who are the same color as the people who are doing the attacking, and feel sure they'd never do anything like that to me.



Years later, I'm in high school, sitting at the kitchen table with my mother on a cold winter night. Her face, usually cheerful, is weary and downcast. Her eyes, often dancing, are filled with despair. I must have seen earlier signs of her pain but on this night, it cuts me to the quick, as I realize just how deep her suffering is.

She's talking with me about her work at the dress factory, where she presses dress after dress in heat that makes the sweat drip from her brow. She's not complaining about the work but expressing pain and grief about the mistreatment she's suffering at the hands of her supervisor, whose hostility toward her has worsened over the years.



From a young age, I've been keenly sensitive to injustice. Memories like these help to reveal why. Although I've never been hosed or beaten, I know the terrible destructiveness of racism, sexism and other forms of oppression. Because I've been bullied in the workplace—something I never thought would happen to me—I know in my bones, just as my mother did, what it means to be looked down upon, to be scorned, to bear the brunt of other people's rage. I've seen the damage in flesh, blood and tears that the inhumanity of people toward one another can inflict.

Just as I've been sensitive to injustice all my life, so I've vowed all my life to fight it. Today, having survived years of bullying, I stand in solidarity with all those who suffer injustice at the hands of their leaders at work,

whether racism, sexism or any other brand of hatred is involved.

Bullying, the topic of this book, involves a specific form of injustice that politicians, legislators and others are finally starting to recognize as a prominent feature of workplace life: **repetitive abusive behavior that devalues and harms other people on the job**. Bullying is also known as “psychological harassment” or “emotional abuse.” A bully seeks to intimidate and torment his or her target, attempting to strip that individual of all dignity and self-esteem.

In Darkness Light Dawns: Exposing Workplace Bullying tells the story of how I was bullied in the workplace year after year, enduring mental and physical anguish, and of how I not only survived but came out stronger for the ordeal. My purposes in sharing my story are to document the impact bullying has; to encourage others who are still being bullied; to take a stand against this unacceptable violation of human dignity and worth and to put an end to bullying in the workplace. If you are suffering from any form of emotional abuse at work, know that you are not alone; millions of others worldwide are fighting the same battles with you. You have my deepest empathy and greatest respect. I hope that by reading my story, you find insights that empower you and help you persevere in the struggles you face. May you find comfort in these pages, as if I were right beside you, listening to you, understanding you, hugging you, weeping with you and praying for you, and upon my departure, passing my torch of hope into your hands.