

Third Survivors' Letter – May 24, 2013

Nearly a year has passed since the New York Times described how our trusted mentors at Horace Mann sexually abused us over a period of decades. In June 2012 we [wrote](#) to the Board of Trustees asking for an independent investigation, an apology, and the resignation of Trustees who covered up the abuse. Unlike other schools which have quickly done these things after similar revelations, Horace Mann has waited a year before responding to these requests. Now, at last, we have at least a partial [reply](#).

The positive elements in the school's response are a step forward. The school has apologized, but the quality of that apology is undermined if the Trustees do not want to know fully the extent and nature of the problem for which the school is apologizing. The school's letter still uses the word "alleged," but it does go on to acknowledge unspecified "abuse."

Eliminating the position of Emeriti Trustees means the resignation of certain Trustees whose departure we welcome, but not all departing Trustees were responsible for the cover-up. An independent investigation would make clear which Trustees should resign and which should be exonerated or even praised.

The Trustees have still not responded substantively to our chief request – that they commission **an independent investigation**. The longer the Trustees resist this, the more they communicate that they do not want to know the full truth about the scale of the abuse or the cover-up perpetrated by the school.

An independent investigation – a searching and fearless moral inventory of past mistakes – is the only way to prevent repeating those mistakes in the future. If Trustees do not want to understand past mistakes, this does not bode well for the safety of children at HM today. Today's HM students are watching closely our example. Several of us reported abuse to the school when we were students. The school did not investigate our reports, but instead sometimes used threats of retribution to pressure us into silence. If Trustees today still refuse an independent investigation of our reports, how can today's students trust HM to investigate fully if, God forbid, they ever have reason to report similar abuse?

An independent investigation is the only way for the Trustees to put this crisis behind them. As long as they resist this, the school's reputation will continue to suffer from a steady drip of revelations in the press and a cloud of suspicion about what else remains hidden. Trustees' resistance devalues the quality and prestige of a Horace Mann diploma, causing fiduciary harm to the school. HM has now become a case study for social-science research into [institutional betrayal](#) of victims of sexual abuse. HM students applying to college are forced to distance themselves from the amoral example of their school. Students must show that, unlike the Trustees, they do believe that "Great is the truth, and it prevails."

A report by Commonwealth Mediation summarizing our confidential statements is no substitute for a proper investigation in which the school transparently opens its files (to the extent allowed by law) and encourages its present and former agents to speak candidly to an investigator.

The Bronx District Attorney recently reported a "systemic pattern" in an "almost four decade period of sexual abuse at Horace Mann." We were sexually abused by more than twenty teachers, including the Headmaster, the Dean of Guidance, the School Chaplain, two Department Chairs, and other senior officials. We reported this to the school that was paid to educate and protect us, and the school covered it up and refused to investigate. To refuse to investigate now is to continue the cover-up. Trustees who are blocking an independent investigation are causing fiduciary harm to the school, and the time has come for these Trustees to resign.

Because Trustees have declined to commission an independent investigator of their own choosing, we intend to cooperate with the investigation conducted by Judge Leslie Crocker Snyder. We would prefer to work with an investigation commissioned by the school, but we will cooperate with Judge Snyder, as her investigation is now the only option available to us.