



# The Phyllis Schlafly Report

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## A Look at the Mind of a Pornography Addict

*Ted Bundy, one of the most notorious serial killers in recent times, was electrocuted in Starke, Florida, on the morning of January 24, 1989. He had confessed to the murders of 23 young women; some believe that he took the lives of as many as 36. He was executed for the 1978 murder of a 12-year-old schoolgirl, whom he killed three weeks after he murdered two Florida State University students as they slept in their beds in a Chi Omega sorority house in Tallahassee. He was found guilty of the murder of the sorority girls in 1979 and convicted of murdering the 12-year-old in 1980. He became the country's most famous death-row inmate.*

*Bundy confessed to the murders only after it became clear that his court appeals were running out and his days were numbered. All his victims were pretty girls, mostly between the ages of 17 and 24, whom Bundy sexually abused and mutilated before disposing of their bodies. Most of the murders took place in Western states — Washington, Utah, Idaho, and Colorado — in the mid-1970s.*

*On the day before his execution, Ted Bundy requested an interview with the well-known psychologist and radio counselor, Dr. James Dobson, who had served as a member of the 1985-1986 Attorney General's Commission on Pornography. Dr. Dobson's half-hour interview with Bundy offers a remarkable insight into the mind of the handsome 42-year-old former Boy Scout and former law student who had embarked on his vicious killings about the age of 28. Bundy's words were spoken by a man who was looking death in the face. He was executed a few hours after the interview was recorded. Outside the prison, hundreds of people cheered his death and the usual protesters against capital punishment were not very visible or vocal.*

*The following transcript of the Dobson-Bundy interview is reprinted by permission. Copyright © 1989 by Focus on the Family.*

**Dobson:** Ted, it is about 2:30 in the afternoon. You are scheduled to be executed tomorrow morning at 7 o'clock, if you don't receive another stay. What is going through your mind? What thoughts have you had in these last few days?

**Bundy:** I won't kid you to say that it's something that I feel that I am in control of, or something that I have come to terms with, because I haven't. It is a moment by moment thing. Sometimes I feel very tranquil and other times I don't feel tranquil at all. What's going through my mind right now is to use the minutes and hours I have left as fruitfully as possible and see what happens. It helps to live in the moment in the essence that we use it productively. Right now I'm feeling calm in large part because I'm here with you.

**Dobson:** For the record, you are guilty of killing many women and girls. Is that correct?

**Bundy:** Yes. Yes, that's true.

**Dobson:** Ted, how did it happen? Take me back. What are the antecedents of the behavior that we've seen? So much grief, so much sorrow, so much pain for so many people. Where did it start, how did this moment come about?

**Bundy:** That's the question of the hour and one that not only people much more intelligent than I will be working on for years but one that I've been working on for years and trying to understand. Is there enough time to explain it all? I don't know. I think I understand it, though, what happened to me to the extent that I can see how certain feelings and ideas have developed in me, to the point that I began to act out certain very violent and very destructive feelings.

**Dobson:** Let's go back then to those roots. First of all, as I understand it, you were raised in what you considered to have been a healthy home. You were not physically abused, you were not sexually abused, you were not emotionally abused.

**Bundy:** No. No way. And that's part of the tragedy of this whole situation. Because I grew up in a wonderful home with two dedicated and loving parents, one of five brothers and sisters, a home where we as children were the focus of my parents' lives, where we regularly attended church, two Christian parents who did not drink, they did not smoke, there was no gambling, there was no physical abuse, or fighting in the home. I'm not saying this was "Leave It To Beaver."

**Dobson:** It wasn't a perfect home.

**Bundy:** No, I don't know if such a home exists, but it was

a fine solid Christian home and I hope no one will try to take the easy way out and try to blame or otherwise accuse my family of contributing to this, because I know, and I'm trying to tell you as honestly as I know how, what happened. And I think this is the message I want to get across: that as a young boy, and I mean a boy of 12 or 13 certainly, that I encountered, outside the home again, in the local grocery store, in a local drug store, the soft-core pornography — what people call soft core. But as I think I explained to you last night, Dr. Dobson, in an anecdote, as young boys do, we explored the back roads and sideways and byways of our neighborhood, and often times people would dump the garbage and whatever they were cleaning out of their house. And from time to time, we would come across pornographic books of a harder nature than, of a more graphic, you might say, more explicit nature than we would encounter, let's say, in your local grocery store. And this also included such things as, let's say, detective magazines.

**Dobson:** Those that involved violence?

**Bundy:** Yes, yes, and this is something I think I want to emphasize is the most damaging kinds of pornography — and again I'm talking from personal experience — hard, real personal experience. Most damaging kinds of pornography are those that involve violence and sexual violence. Because the wedding of those two forces, as I know only too well, brings about behavior that is just, just too terrible to describe.

**Dobson:** Now, walk me through that. What was going on in your mind at that time? What was happening?

**Bundy:** Before we go any further, I think it's important to me that people believe what I am saying. I tell you that I am not blaming pornography. I am not saying that it caused me to go out and do certain things. And I take full responsibility for whatever I have done and all the things I have done. That's not the question here.

The question and the issue is how this kind of literature contributed and helped mold and shape the kinds of violent behavior.

**Dobson:** It fueled your fantasies, didn't it?

**Bundy:** In the beginning it fuels this kind of thought process. Then at a certain time, it is instrumental in — I would say crystallizing — making into something which is almost like a separate entity inside. At that point, I was at the verge of acting out these kinds of thoughts.

**Dobson:** Now, I really want to understand that. You had gone about as far as you could go in your own fantasy life with printed material, or printed and video or film, magazine, what have you. And then there was the urge to take that little step, or big step over to a physical event?

**Bundy:** And it happened in stages, gradually. It didn't necessarily, not to me at least, happen overnight. My experience with pornography generally, but with pornography that deals on a violent level with sexuality, is once you become addicted to it — and I look at this as a kind of addiction like other kinds of addiction — I would keep looking for more potent, more explicit, more graphic kinds of material. Like an

addiction, you keep craving something which is harder, harder, something which gives you a greater sense of excitement until you reach the point where the pornography only goes so far. You reach that jumping-off point where you begin to wonder if maybe actually doing it will give you that which is beyond just reading about it or looking at it.

**Dobson:** How long did you stay at that point before you actually assaulted someone?

**Bundy:** That is a very delicate point, by the way, in my own development. We're talking about having reached the point or gray area that, that surrounded that point over a course of years.

I would say a couple of years. And what I was dealing with there were very strong inhibitions against criminal behavior or violent behavior that had been conditioned into me, bred into me in my environment, in my neighborhood, in my church, in my school. Things that said, "No, this is wrong. Even to think of it is wrong, but certainly to do it is wrong." I'm on that edge, you might say the last vestiges of restraint, the barriers to actually doing something were being tested constantly, and assailed through the kind of fantasy life that was fueled largely by pornography.

**Dobson:** Do you remember what pushed you over that edge? Do you remember the decision to go for it? Do you remember where you decided to throw caution to the wind?

**Bundy:** When you say pushed, I know what you're saying. I don't want to infer again that I was some helpless kind of victim. We're talking about an influence—that is, an influence of violent types of media, violent types of pornography—which was an indispensable link in the chain of events that led to the behavior, the assaults, the murders.

It's a very difficult thing to describe, the sensation of reaching that point where I knew that — it was like something had, say, snapped — that I knew that I couldn't control it any more, that these barriers that I had learned as a child, that had been instilled in me, were not enough to hold me back with respect to seeking out and harming somebody.

**Dobson:** Would it be accurate to call that a frenzy, a sexual frenzy?

**Bundy:** Well, yes. That's one way to describe it, a compulsion — a building up of this destructive energy. Another factor here that I haven't mentioned is the use of alcohol. What alcohol did in conjunction with, let's say, my exposure to pornography was alcohol reduced my inhibitions at the same time the fantasy life that was fueled by pornography eroded them further.

**Dobson:** In the early days, you were nearly always about half-drunk when you did these things; is that right?

**Bundy:** Yes.

**Dobson:** Was that always true?

**Bundy:** I would say that was generally the case. Almost without exception.

**Dobson:** All right, if I can understand it now, there's this battle going on within. There are the conventions that you've been taught. There's the right and wrong that you learned as a

child. And then there is this unbridled passion fueled by your plunge into hard-core, violent pornography. And those things are at war with each other.

**Bundy:** Yes.

**Dobson:** And then with the alcohol diminishing the inhibitions, you let go.

**Bundy:** Well, yes. And you can summarize it that way, and that's accurate, certainly. And it just occurred to me that some people would say that, well, I've seen that stuff, and it doesn't do anything to me. And I can understand that. Virtually everyone can be exposed to so-called pornography, and while they were aroused to it one degree or another, not go out and do anything wrong.

**Dobson:** Addictions are like that. They affect some people more than they affect others. But there is a percentage of people affected by hard-core pornography in a very violent way, and you're obviously one of them.

**Bundy:** That was a major component, and I don't know why I was vulnerable to it. All I know is that it had an impact on me that was just so essential to the development of the violent behavior that I engaged in.

**Dobson:** Ted, after you committed your first murder, what was the emotional effect on you? What happened in the days after that?

**Bundy:** Again, please understand, that even all these years later it is very difficult to talk about it, and reliving it through talking about it is difficult, to say the least, but I want you to understand what happened. It was like coming out of some kind of horrible trance or dream. I can only liken it to after, I don't want to overdramatize it, but to having been possessed by something so awful and so alien, and then the next morning wake up from it, remember what happened and realize that basically, I mean in the eyes of the law, certainly in the eyes of God, you were responsible; to wake up in the morning and realize what I had done and with a clear mind and all my essential moral and ethical feelings intact at that moment, absolutely horrified that I was capable of doing something like that.

**Dobson:** You really hadn't known that before?

**Bundy:** There is just absolutely no way to describe, first, the brutal urge to do that kind of thing and then what happens. I want people to understand this, too, and I'm not saying this gratuitously, because it's important that people understand this. Basically, I was a normal person. I wasn't some guy hanging out at bars or a bum. I wasn't a pervert in the sense that people look at somebody and say, "I know there is something wrong with him, you can just tell."

I was essentially a normal person. I had good friends. I led a normal life, except for this one small but very potent and very destructive segment of it that I kept very secret and very close to myself and didn't let anybody know about it. And part of the shock and horror to my dear friends and family years ago when I was first arrested was, there was no clue. They looked at me and they looked at the All-American boy. I wasn't perfect, but I was OK. The basic humanity and the

basic spirit that God gave me was intact, but unfortunately became overwhelmed at times.

And people need to recognize that those of us who are or who have been so much influenced by violence in the media, in particular, pornographic violence, are not some kind of inherent monsters. We are your sons and we are your husbands and we grew up in regular families. And pornography can reach out and snatch a kid out of any house today. It snatched me out of my home 20, 30 years ago. And as diligent as my parents were, and they were diligent in protecting their children, and as good a Christian home as we had, and we had a wonderful Christian home, there is no protection against the kind of influences that are loose in the society that tolerates.

**Dobson:** You feel this really deeply, don't you? Ted, outside these walls right now, there are several hundred reporters that wanted to talk to you. And you asked me to come here from California because you had something you wanted to say. This hour that we have together is not just an interview with a man who is scheduled to die tomorrow morning. I'm here and you're here because of this message that you're talking about right here. You really feel that hard-core pornography and the doorway to it, soft-core pornography, is doing untold damage to other people and causing other women to be abused and killed the way you did others?

**Bundy:** Listen. I'm no social scientist and I haven't done a survey, I mean I don't pretend that I know what John Q. Citizen thinks about this. But I have lived in prison for a long time now, and I've met a lot of men who were motivated to commit violence just like me. And without exception, every one of them was deeply involved in pornography — without question, without exception, deeply influenced and consumed by an addiction to pornography. There's no question about it. The FBI's own study on serial homicide shows that the most common interest among serial killers is pornography.

**Dobson:** That's true.

**Bundy:** And it's real. It's real.

**Dobson:** Ted, what would your life have been like without that influence? You can only speculate.

**Bundy:** I know it would have been far better not just for me — and excuse me for being so self-centered here — it would have been a lot better for me and for lots of other people and lots of other innocent people, victims and families, it would have been a lot better. There's no question but it would have been a fuller life, certainly a life that would not have involved, I am absolutely certain, a life that would not have involved this kind of violence that I have committed.

**Dobson:** I'm sure, Ted, if I were able to ask you the questions that are being asked out there, one of the most important, as you come down to perhaps your final hours: Are you thinking about all those victims out there and their families who are so wounded? Years later, their lives have not returned to normal; they will never return to normal. Are you carrying that load, that weight? Is there remorse there?

**Bundy:** Again, I know that people will accuse me of being self-serving, but we are beyond that now. I am just

telling you how I feel. But through God's help, I have been able to come to the point where I — much too late but better late than never — feel the hurt and the pain that I am responsible for. Yes, absolutely. In the past few days, myself and a number of investigators have been talking about a number of unsolved cases, murders that I was involved in.

It's hard to talk about all these years later because it revives in me all those terrible feelings and those thoughts that I have steadfastly and diligently dealt with and I think successfully with the love of God. And yet it's reopened that, and I felt the pain and I felt the horror again of all that; and I can only hope that those who I have harmed, those who I caused so much grief — even if they don't believe my expression of sorrow and remorse — will believe what I am saying now: that there are loose in their towns and their communities people like me today whose dangerous impulses are being fueled, day in and day out, by violence in the media in various forms, particularly sexualized violence.

And what scares me, and let's come into the present now because what I am talking about happened 20, 30 years ago in my formative stages. And what scares and appalls me, Dr. Dobson, is when I see what's on cable TV, some of the movies and some of the violence in the movies that comes into homes today, with stuff that they wouldn't show in X-rated adult theaters 30 years ago.

**Dobson:** The slasher movies is what you're talking about.

**Bundy:** That stuff is, I'm telling you from personal experience, is the most graphic violence on screen, particularly as it gets into the home to children who may be unattended or unaware that they may be a Ted Bundy who has that vulnerability, that predisposition to be influenced by that kind of behavior, by that kind of movie, that kind of violence.

There are kids out there switching the TV dial around and come upon these movies late at night, or I don't know when they are on, but they're on and any kid can watch them. It's scary when I think what would have happened to me if I had seen them, and it's scary enough that I just ran into stuff outside the home.

But to know that children are watching that kind of thing today, or can pick up their phone and dial away for it, or send away for it.

**Dobson:** Can you help me understand this desensitization process that took place? What was going on in your mind?

**Bundy:** About the desensitization, I describe it in specific terms. Each time I'd harm someone, each time I would kill someone, there would be an enormous amount, especially at first, an enormous amount of horror, guilt, remorse afterward; but then the impulse to do it again would come back even stronger. The unique thing about how this worked, Dr. Dobson, is I still felt in my regular life the full range of guilt and remorse about other things.

**Dobson:** One of the final murders that you committed, of course, was apparently little Kimberly Leach, 12 years of age. I think the public outcry is greater there because an innocent child was taken from a playground. What did you

feel after that? Were there normal emotions three days later? Where were you, Ted?

**Bundy:** I can't really talk about that right now. That's too painful. I would like to be able to convey to you what that experience is like, but I can't. I won't be able to talk about it.

**Dobson:** OK.

**Bundy:** I can't begin to understand. Well, I can try, but I'm aware that I can't begin to understand the pain that the parents of these children, these young women that I've harmed, feel, and I can't restore really much to them, if anything, and I won't pretend to. And I don't even expect them to forgive me and I am not asking for it. That kind of forgiveness is of God. If they have it, they have it. If they don't, well, maybe they'll find it someday.

**Dobson:** Do you deserve the punishment the state has inflicted upon you?

**Bundy:** That's a very good question, and I'll answer it very honestly. I don't want to die, I'm not going to kid you. I kid you not. I deserve certainly the most extreme punishment society has, and I think society deserves to be protected from me and from others like me. That's for sure.

I think what I hope will come of our discussion is I think society deserves to be protected from itself. Because, as we've been talking, there are forces loose in this country, particularly again this kind of violent pornography where, on the one hand well-meaning decent people will condemn behavior of a Ted Bundy, while they're walking past a magazine rack full of the very kinds of things that send young kids down the road to be Ted Bundys. That's the irony.

We're talking here not just about morals. What I'm talking about is going beyond retribution, which is what people want with me; going beyond retribution and punishment because there is no way in the world that killing me is going to restore those beautiful children to their parents and correct and soothe the pain.

But I'll tell you there are lots of other kids playing in streets around this country today who are going to be dead tomorrow, and the next day and the next day and next month, because other young people are reading the kinds of things and seeing the kinds of things that are available in the media today.

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**Pornography's Victims** is a paperback book containing the testimonies of 32 victims who testified before the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography in 1985-1986. Edited by Phyllis Schlafly, it is available @ \$4.95 + \$1 shipping from Pere Marquette Press, Box 495, Alton, IL 62002.

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