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A RELIGIOUS SUB-CULTURE MANY AMERICANS HAVE NEVER HEARD OF, YET HAS THOUSANDS OF CHURCHES ACROSS THE COUNTRY ... CHURCHES THAT CRITICS CLAIM CAN FOSTER PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE

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Elizabeth Vargas' Yearlong Investigation Into The Independent Fundamental Baptist Church, Airls On "20/20," Friday, April 8, 10-11 PM ET

Try to imagine the pain and humiliation of a teenage girl, just 15 years old, who says she was forced to stand in front of a New Hampshire church congregation and confess her "sin" of being pregnant. She says not only was she forced to confess her pregnancy, but also to ask for their forgiveness – with no mention of the man she says sexually abused her. After all, she says, the pastor told her it's better than being stoned to death as the bible describes. That is what Tina Anderson alleged happened to her at her ultra conservative Independent Fundamental Baptist, or IFB, Church. The IFB has thousands of congregations across the country, but many people have never heard of it. That was, until another woman, Jocelyn Zichter, began a public campaign – armed with nothing but a computer and memories of her own alleged abuse that she says church beliefs can foster. And survivors are now coming out of the woodwork, to say she's not alone.

Elizabeth Vargas' yearlong exclusive investigation into a religious sub-culture that critics claim can foster – even cover up – physical and sexual abuse airs on **"20/20"** on **FRIDAY, APRIL 8 (10:00 – 11:00 p.m. ET) on the ABC Television Network**. Critics say the church teaches a strict interpretation of the bible including the practice known as breaking the will of the child, with some advocating that it even be applied to infants as young as two weeks old.

"I had a decision to make that either I was going to kind of curl up in the corner and be quiet or I was going to stand up for my family and tell the truth," says Jocelyn Zichter.

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Pastor Chuck Phelps, the former pastor at Tina Anderson's New Hampshire church, denies Tina was disciplined by the church or that there was any attempt to cover up a crime. He declined repeated interview requests but provided a statement: "Tina was involved in an ongoing sexual relationship with Mr. Ernie Willis... Tina lied to her mother and to me about this relationship." He also said he brought the allegations to the attention of police who failed to investigate further. Ernie Willis, Tina Anderson's alleged attacker has pleaded not guilty to sexual assault.

Brian Fuller, the current pastor at Tina's former IFB church, says all IFB Churches operate independently and that his church has nothing to hide. He opened his doors to "20/20" cameras, was critical of how Tina's case was handled and denounced any abusive disciplinary practices, adding: "The Bible says that I'm supposed to love my children, I'm never supposed to ever do anything out of anger or manipulation. And that's what our people are taught here," he told Vargas.

"20/20" is anchored by Elizabeth Vargas and Chris Cuomo. David Sloan is executive producer.

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