

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
From *YouthWorker Journal* and YouthWorker.com

Exposed

Police Release Photos Taken by Serial Killer

By Paul Asay

Posted: March 22, 2010

What Happened:

Police in California recently released photos of some women and children who posed in the 1970s for Rodney Alcala—a professional photographer who earlier this year was convicted of killing four young women and one 12-year-old girl.

The released photos, some of which are shown in this Youth Culture Lesson, are just a fraction of the more than 1,000 pictures police found more than 30 years ago in a Seattle storage locker rented by the serial killer.

Authorities believe Alcala—who's suspected in other murders across the country—may be behind other unsolved missing persons cases. Police believe Alcala may have asked his victims to pose for him—sometimes encouraging them to model in the nude—before kidnapping and killing them. By releasing the photos, police hope families or the subjects themselves will contact them.

Since the photos were made public, authorities have been deluged with calls. Many of them have come from families of missing people, desperate for new information of what might've happened to their loved ones.

Other calls, however, have come from the photo subjects themselves, letting police know they're OK. One subject—who was a teen at the time Alcala photographed her—admitted to authorities that Alcala was a neighbor of hers, and she was flattered that a professional photographer had shown an interest in her.

So far, police have learned the identities of nine of the 19 people depicted in Alcala's photographs, and all are alive and well. The other 10—well, authorities are still looking, hoping that all escaped the killer's grasp.

Talk About It:

Kids typically are always told never to talk to strangers—maybe more so in the 1970s—but Alcala had a talent of talking people into allowing him to photograph them. Do you think Alcala's subjects were too trusting? Would you have reacted differently?

About 800,000 people, many of them children, are reported missing every year. Some are found quickly. Others never are, and police suspect that many are abducted. Can you think of ways to protect yourself?

One of Alcalá's subjects said he was a neighbor of hers, and authorities say many victims of abduction, sexual abuse or murder knew their assailants. Do you have people—parents, teachers, youth leaders—with whom you feel comfortable talking if someone else makes you feel uncomfortable?

What the Bible Says:

“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matt. 10:16).

“I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety” (Ps. 4:8).

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows” (Matt. 10:29-30).