

Scapegoats

what are they, what do they do?

1. In a society, one person is singled out as the cause of the troubles of that society or group and is expelled or killed. That person is the scapegoat. Social order is restored as people are contented that they have solved the cause of their problems by removing the scapegoat. Until the next time, when they find they have to find another.
2. The problem for the scapegoat is that he/she forced into a passive position, as detractors sweep away any attempts at defence. The victim needs to understand that this is a form of symbolic castration and rape. Like many rapes and acts of assault, it is a sexualized power game to determine who is on top. The victim experiences shame and humiliation, being forced to take the blame, bringing relief for his/her detractors, who may have suffered irrational guilt feelings from childhood on.
3. Since designated scapegoats are frequently subjected to discrediting attacks, they may feel scapegoated even when they are not actually being blamed. And such feelings can be brought on as a result of fantasies in which they imagine what might happen to them.
4. It is possible to identify certain conditions for the choosing of a scapegoat. First, it must be understood that the scapegoat is in no way to blame for the situation in which he/she finds him/herself. But it can be seen that scapegoat victims have similar traits that allow them to be classified as a group. They are part of the community, but are seen as 'outsiders' - people on the fringe of the group, who do not participate fully - in other words, they challenge in some way the beliefs, practices or norms of the community. Victims commonly have 'special' qualities that mark them out as 'exceptional' and arouse envy.
5. Such members of the community stand out, are more easily visible, vulnerable, and easier to persecute. But this is not the only reason they are chosen as victims. They are chosen because they have the air of being, or expecting to be, victims. And this is because they have a sense of their own uniqueness, and know that in times of stress or pressure, they are the ones the community will come for, to pay the price.
6. When full-blown scapegoating is in process, the community demands that the scapegoat be driven out or destroyed, and in this way all the community's problems will be solved. When this has been done, there is a release of tension in which people do feel better, and therefore believe that the sacrifice was justified. The scapegoat is regarded in a dual light:
 - a) he/she was definitely the cause of the problems, since everything is now better;
 - b) he/she was a very powerful, almost god-like person, to be able to cause all that trouble.Hence, scapegoats are remembered as being powerful and special, and in time, become sanctified, and are thought of as saviours of their community.

Stop the rot! Refuse to be scapegoated! You are special and you know it! But that does not mean you are to blame for all the ills of your community.