

# Gabby Petito's Voice Is Not Silent After All

*By Margie Downey*

Gabby Petito fatally aspired to blog about adventures driving cross country, fun things they did, and their loving relationship. No wonder her boyfriend was so set against that goal of hers, since he would be included in the narrative, eventually showing the good and bad in him and their relationship, as well.

Gabby made that blog essentially, but indirectly included in her end-of-life story some ugly police reports and bodycam videos, testimonials of people who saw her or her lover in upset or distressed moods, discussions revealing assaults between them, and events that shed new light on the people she had lived with regularly. There developed a permanent, world-recognized record of her being hurt, trying to escape the violent man in her life. Gabby never chose to record those herself in her pretty blog, but her story came to light, more fully and poignantly than she ever intended.

She was right that she had a great story to tell, in common with millions of abused women.

Gabby had tough circumstances to sort out for years, with personal challenges to be fiercely independent. Passionate love transformed her and made her euphoric at times, then locked terrifying controls on her personally, on her finances and residence tied up with the abusing person she feared. His power discouraged her dreams and broke her self esteem and boundaries. She wanted to tell her story, but partially. She was not brutally honest with herself about the dark side until the last days, maybe only on the day she died.

Gabby ultimately knew she was in trouble. All this intensified beyond anything she could still control, like she used to do. She could not sweet-talk her way out, or be sexy and distracting enough, clown around, or get enough distance (for long enough) to get her life safe and happy again. The sun shone fewer hours each day for Gabby as the darkness grew in their sick relationship. She called her abuser "fiance", even when there were times she wanted to be on the other side of the world from him. She walked from the van for a distance, but not far enough.

She did not know how to resolve their love and the danger of his raging power over her. Her choice to stay with him was the wrong one and cost her life itself. She lost her bet. Victims like Gabby have known they were in risky situations, but hoped beyond all reason for the affectionate sacrifice they invested to fix things and make the end result good. It would not work that way after so many of these patterns were established. There can be hard-won redemptive changes, but she never found them. Some do, but most victims have not found true liberty or restoration after such controlling abuse.

Add into her cheerful records and photos: her weeping testimonial, and strangers witnessing her boyfriend in altercations. She completed in her life blog what she did not have the courage or

wisdom to say yet at her young age of 22. She did not find freedom to share the dark side of her life publicly. She wanted a travel blog with pretty pictures of them having fun and being in love, but only that side of their lives.

Gabby was also living abused, put down, frightened, and physically hurt by the man she adored, who was her sexual mate, and who she dressed cute to please. Yet, she could only talk about any troubles when she blamed herself and took all the responsibility for being the problem. Like so many victims before her, Gabby learned how to explain it away, apologize and calm the storm until the next one arose. She blamed herself.

Tiny, willowy Gabby was not the initiator of violence, but was made to believe she was by “gas-lighting”. She learned by being accused and manipulated by the man she tried to protect. Her efforts to defend herself physically in the van fight were mistaken by local police as her being the primary aggressor- due to what each person stated and the scratches she left on him when she fought back. This became part of her life records, as clearly as words she wrote in a blog.

Like many abused girls and women, she thought she had things under control. She repeatedly gave in, apologized, covered for him, and convinced herself that her feelings of wanting to be free and safe were unreasonable. She robbed herself of normal self protection, for the sake of protecting them as a couple. She was like a naive frog slowly boiling in a giant pot of water, not aware of the fatal danger being so imminent. Thinking there would always be something she could do to fix any argument, she bet on it, slowly losing that bet. The cost was very high.

Gabby was hard on herself to be pleasing to him and others in her life, but still had a streak of wanting to do things her way. She owned a van and lived in it, too, as well as her boyfriend’s parents’ house. She was exhibitionist in dress and outrageous behavior, looking for fun in the sun in a giddy, child-like way. She was poised, talkative and confident in her happy pictures, but overcome in the crying pictures, choking out words to blame herself for everything. She could not tell it all or photograph it all, but she did get the story out eventually in her weepy, upside-down denials, obvious self-blame, and in her physically fighting back with fingernails to his face and hands to stop his hitting. Surely in her final fight for life, she left deeper scars.

Gabby found her voice to eloquently alert the world that she was abused and desperately had needed help. She wrote the final chapter of her life blog in her tears on the police bodycam videos and surely on the day she was brutally murdered, apparently by her lover. Her tears and blood cry out like Abel’s blood in the Bible story for justice, for true understanding of the hidden crimes against her and all abused women, and for redemption for anyone being abused. It was her last cry, a lighthouse to flee for safety for anyone who remains in a similar hurtful situation.

*For help to recognize violence for someone you care about, find solutions and free resources for a better life, please visit [abigailsangels.org](http://abigailsangels.org). We are Christian overcomers of abuse lighting a better way to live free of violence and abuse. AADVP is a 501c3 tax exempt nonprofit educational corporation in Dallas, TX.*