

The prevalence of child sexual abuse is difficult to determine because it is often not reported, but its effects are undeniably long-term and severe. In this powerful book, twelve survivors share their stories and the steps they took in their journey towards healing by breaking the silence. Their accounts expose the harsh realities of child sexual abuse and the pain it causes, while offering hope and encouragement to everyone who has been sexually abused as a child – and those who care about them.

Compassionate and sensitively written, *Survivors* is a useful and inspiring tool for those who have been sexually abused as children. It also equips family, friends and caregivers to help survivors move forward with courage and confidence in their respective healing journeys.

I am in deep awe at their resilience in having survived such profound trauma, and their courage in sharing their stories so that others who are abused will have hope in knowing they are not alone.

Vivienne Ng

Chief Psychologist, Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore

A very worthwhile read.

Dr. Lee Cheng

President, Singapore Psychiatric Association

(Survivors) must know that the abuse was not their fault and they are not alone. It is never too late to ... start the healing process.

Professor Ho Lai Yun

Director, Child Development Programme, Ministry of Health, Singapore

visit our website at:
www.marshallcavendish.com/genref



Marshall Cavendish
Editions



Eirliani Abdul Rahman
Daniel Fung

SURVIVORS *Breaking the Silence on Child Sexual Abuse*

Marshall Cavendish
Editions

SURVIVORS

*Breaking the Silence on
Child Sexual Abuse*

Eirliani Abdul Rahman | Daniel Fung

Survivors of child sexual abuse suffer in silence. They often keep the abuse a secret for many years and may have been living with those memories for a long time. They may have tried to tell others and met with resistance or felt there was no one they could trust. For these reasons, they struggle with poor self-esteem and feelings of guilt, shame and blame. However, they must know that the abuse was not their fault and they are not alone. It is never too late to disclose their experience and start the healing process from the trauma.

Professor Ho Lai Yun

Director, Child Development Programme,
Ministry of Health, Singapore

This engaging and touching book definitely addresses a very real and significant issue of child sexual abuse. I applaud the efforts of the authors and the survivors who shared their stories. A very worthwhile read.

Dr. Lee Cheng

President,
Singapore Psychiatric Association

Having worked for close to three decades with both child victims and adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, I am pained at the horrors that these writers of varying ages and from different countries have had to endure during their tender years. Yet, I am in deep awe at their resilience in having survived such profound trauma, and their courage in sharing their stories so that others who are abused will have hope in knowing they are not alone. We know that such devastating betrayal in childhood has long-

For Review only

reaching effects on adult relationships, self-identity and mental wellness, and I send them my prayers and wish them only the best in their individual healing journeys. May they continue to find safe, stable, and trustworthy folk who will walk alongside them on the road to wholeness and recovery.

Vivienne Ng

Chief Psychologist,

Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore

SURVIVORS

*Breaking the Silence on
Child Sexual Abuse*

Eirliani Abdul Rahman | Daniel Fung

For Review only

© 2018 Marshall Cavendish International (Asia) Private Limited
Text © Eirliani Abdul Rahman and Daniel Fung

Reprinted 2018, 2020

Published by Marshall Cavendish Editions
An imprint of Marshall Cavendish International



All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner. Requests for permission should be addressed to the Publisher, Marshall Cavendish International (Asia) Private Limited, 1 New Industrial Road, Singapore 536196. Tel: (65) 6213 9300.
E-mail: genref@sg.marshallcavendish.com
Website: www.marshallcavendish.com/genref

The publisher makes no representation or warranties with respect to the contents of this book, and specifically disclaims any implied warranties or merchantability or fitness for any particular purpose, and shall in no event be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damage, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

Other Marshall Cavendish Offices:
Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 99 White Plains Road, Tarrytown NY 10591-9001, USA • Marshall Cavendish International (Thailand) Co Ltd, 253 Asoke, 12th Flr, Sukhumvit 21 Road, Klongtoey Nua, Wattana, Bangkok 10110, Thailand • Marshall Cavendish (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, Times Subang, Lot 46, Subang Hi-Tech Industrial Park, Batu Tiga, 40000 Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.

Marshall Cavendish is a registered trademark of Times Publishing Limited

National Library Board, Singapore Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Name(s): Eirliani Abdul Rahman. I Fung, Daniel, author.
Title: Survivors : breaking the silence on child sexual abuse / Eirliani Abdul Rahman, Daniel Fung.
Description: Singapore : Marshall Cavendish Editions, [2018]
Identifier(s): OCN 1006822994 I ISBN 978-981-47-9401-5 (paperback)
Subject(s): LCSH: Child sexual abuse. I Sexual abuse victims.
Classification: DDC 362.76--dc23

Printed in Singapore

Image Credits:
All images courtesy of the respective contributors except page 98 (Eirliani Abdul Rahman).

This book contains personal accounts of the experiences
of survivors of child sexual abuse.
Some readers may find the content disturbing.

CONTENTS

Foreword	9
Preface	11
Part I: Stories	
1. Sasha	15
“It was like when he raped me, he took a part of who I was.”	
2. Thu Thu	45
“But that one Barbie I had, her yellow dress had dry cum all over because we didn’t have stuff to wipe things with on the mezzanine floor. It stank of semen.”	
3. Johannes	59
“There were areas of my body which I did not want to touch at all. This feeling is still there. Thank you, grandmother.”	
4. Clara	87
“I sleep again and wake to my 7.30 alarm cock. Clock, it is a clock.”	
5. Michael	113
“Blood and shit.”	
6. Imran	131
“I’m done. I’m all spoken out.”	
7. Nissah	150
“I do not want to live in the darkness.”	
8. Archana	164
“I just want to ask him, ‘What the fuck were you thinking?’”	
9. Don	195
“I began to hit her fingers whenever they crept towards me during the day, her face sheepish.”	

For Review only

10. Lucie “I wanted him to die.”	203
11. Nikita “I started cutting myself quite regularly. I still have some scars on my thighs.”	228
12. Alice “I live with regret because there are many things I cannot compensate for.”	241
 Part II: The Problem of Child Abuse	
The Problem of Child Abuse <i>by Dr. Daniel Fung</i>	251

FOREWORD

Bernard Gerbaka

President, International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN)

“I... always wanted people to... read my mind so that I wouldn’t be misjudged. I think that happens way too often. I feel like there’s a reason for why people do the things they do; the reasons may not be legitimate or excusable, but it’s still an explanation. People always look at what lies on the surface, at the obvious. They rarely try to see deeper, the cause of it all, how it all happened. You can always trace things back to the beginning and find the unseen pieces that affected people’s actions. I wish my parents took more time to analyse me as a child, so they could question themselves as to why all of a sudden, I had difficulties...”

Lucie (Chapter 10)

In this book, there are many testimonies, painful stories, typical scenarios and underestimated situations. Each child has a different experience of sexual abuse, either with a stranger or with a close relative; the consequences are often dramatic and overwhelming. They are rarely about physical scars; they are always about the image of oneself, the value it is given and the support it provides.

Most importantly, those stories bring to our conscience what our competences, potentials and duties are, as a coalition of diverse and experienced professionals working with children: to prevent child abuse and protect our children!

This is the core mission of the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN).

Connecting more than 1,200 professionals in about 120 countries for the past 40 years, ISPCAN is a board member in the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, aiming at working for a better world for children. ISPCAN offers training materials to professionals globally and is enriched by membership cross-culturally, to better learn about the problem and its prevention, about professional intervention, about child and family empowerment: parenting is now a critical component of our INSPIRE WHO strategies. In current difficult times for displaced children, ISPCAN sustains and strengthens the global movement for child protection and shares material for expertise and tools for leadership and advocacy, globally, in a culturally sensitive manner.

Children matter most! Within supportive families, at the centre of a child-friendly system, they define our present as we carve their future. We owe them that much.

PREFACE

When I set out to chronicle the stories of these 12 brave men and women, survivors of child sexual abuse (CSA), I had no inkling of the road ahead. I did not expect these individuals to be so gifted in storytelling: they were lyrical, they were poignant, they were happy, they were sad. I was moved, not just by their bravery in sharing such a dark period in their lives, something which has left an indelible stamp on their beings. I was moved also by their desire to reach out to other survivors, to tell them that one day they will heal, even if today seems like being submerged in the darkest of pits. I admire their courage, more so because two in particular have chosen to use their real names, Imran and Sasha. And that four of them, Imran and Sasha included, have agreed to read excerpts of their respective chapters at book readings.

When I put out a call to friends in December 2014, asking to spread the word that I was looking to interview survivors of CSA, the recommendations came in fast and furious. Every survivor in the book was either a friend, or became one via word of mouth. I feel honoured and blessed that they had chosen to tell their story now, putting aside their fears and concerns that this may trigger emotional pain. They chose instead to look to the future, to show others that their journeys illuminate the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. In the face of such fierce determination, I felt it my duty to reflect their voices in as true a light as possible, to show the multi-faceted side of each storyteller. So these stories are not all doom and gloom. There is plenty of wit,

self-effacing irony, even laughter. There is peace too where there is closure. And, always, the hope that their stories will help others.

Child sexual abuse is not confined to any particular demographic segment of society: it can affect anyone, regardless of class or social status. More often, it is opportunistic, taking place because of the abuser's close proximity to the child, and it is also sometimes about the display of power and the asymmetry of power within a household. In this book, you will meet two young millennials, best friends in their early twenties, residing in Berlin: one was abused by a house help growing up, the other by a boyfriend. You will find a young lady from Singapore, born physically challenged and taken advantage of by her own father, and a woman who had been abused by her teacher and whose sister committed suicide many years later after having endured abuse at the hands of the same teacher as a child. You will encounter a woman in her early thirties from Myanmar, who was preyed on by a much older male cousin as a child, and another, now in her fifties from Britain, who fell into a child prostitution ring in her late teens after having been abused by her father. It is not the case that the perpetrators are all men. You will hear the stories of five men, two of whom were abused by their grandmothers and another by his mother. The 12 survivors hail from Germany, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Singapore, South Africa, the UK and the US, of diverse backgrounds. Some of the abusers died before the survivors could come to terms with what had happened. Each chose their own path towards healing.

Each story is the voice of one survivor. Every teleconversation or meeting was about three hours long so that I could record verbatim what they said; any longer and it could be too draining. Here, I have put down only their side of the conversation, as if they are speaking directly to you, the reader, although in some places they addressed me using my nickname "Lin".

I marvel at their courage to describe all the horrifying details to make the picture as complete as possible. More than once, I felt sickened by the horrific abuse that these survivors had been through. On one occasion, I found it hard to transcribe my notes as the multiple abuses that this survivor had gone through really wrenched at my core. How can it be possible that human beings can be such beasts? But the light of hope from these survivors – that their valiant telling of their stories will help ease the pain of other survivors and their loved ones, and help point the way towards healing – renews me every time I read what they have sent me, be it lyrics, poetry or verse. I honour their commitment to this book.

To paraphrase Ralph Waldo Emerson: to know that one life has breathed easier, this is to have lived.

Eirliani Abdul Rahman
September 2017
Colorado, USA



PART I: STORIES

SASHA

Sasha Joseph Neulinger, now 28, was sexually abused by two uncles and a cousin as a child. The abuse began when he was four years old and ended after he told his mother when he was eight. The next nine years were spent in court testifying against his abusers, the toll of which led him to become suicidal. One uncle and the cousin were put behind bars, while the other pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 12 years of probation.

In April 2014, Sasha launched a Kickstarter Campaign for “Rewind To Fast-Forward”, an autobiographical documentary on surviving multigenerational child sexual abuse. Raising over US\$176,000 from over 4,395 backers, “Rewind To Fast-Forward” became the 6th most backed documentary in Kickstarter history. After digitising over 200 hours of home video, Sasha directed an Emmy Award-winning crew in his hometown, interviewing his mother, father, sister, detective, prosecutor, and psychiatrist for a three-week film shoot. Sasha also travels the United States as a motivational speaker for reforms in child advocacy and child protection. His TEDxBozeman talk entitled “Trauma is irreversible. How it shapes us is our choice” (www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_WL5iqvPLY) has been viewed more than 150,000 times. In 2016, Sasha founded his own public speaking company, Voice For The Kids, LLC.

a teleconversation, Bozeman, Montana

6th March 2016

RAPED

I grew up in Rosemont, Pennsylvania, just outside Philadelphia. It was a nice middle-class suburban area. Beautiful Victorian houses, safe streets, and beautiful mature trees and foliage. Our house was big, with a wonderful wraparound deck and a spacious front and backyard. I'm sure everything appeared normal from the outside, and certainly no outsider would have assumed that it wouldn't be a safe place for children.

When people think about child sexual abuse, I think it is easier for them to imagine a creepy man in a white van, or a dirty stranger kidnapping a child from a schoolyard or abusing them remotely. It's easier for people to jump to the conclusion that child abusers are people who we don't know.

My uncle Howard was a well-trusted and well-respected Jewish cantor who was the first cantor to sing for the Pope at the Vatican in 1992, and who sang for the highly well-respected and largest synagogue in Manhattan, New York, Temple Emanu-El. My uncle Larry was always the life of the party and was great at making people laugh, and my cousin Stewart was a military veteran who had served his country in the United States Air Force. All three men raped me multiple times. At least in the United States, in 80 percent or more of child sexual abuse cases, the child is abused by someone he or she knows and trusts.



UNCLE HOWARD

When I was four years old, I was raped for the first time, by my Uncle Howard, although this was not the first time that he had abused me. The pain was excruciating and I couldn't understand why it was happening. It felt like with every second, a part of me was being murdered, like a part of my consciousness was dying. I was turning off inside, surrendering vital pieces of my soul in exchange for each breath.

I had never been so confused. The confusion was a murky cloud that engulfed me along with the pain, which made it hard to breathe. I wanted to cry, I wanted to scream, and I wanted my life to be over if the pain wouldn't stop. I couldn't cry; I couldn't talk.

I was paralysed.

I remember that as this was happening, I started to find a numbness. I came to the point where all I could feel was my body moving back and forth, yet I couldn't feel it anymore.

I remember focusing on the blue fibres of the carpet in my room. I could feel my face rubbing against the carpet. I could feel my heart beating and my mind becoming very quiet.

When it was over, I wasn't able to exit this emotional numbness. I was in a quiet space, but filled with fear. It was like when he raped me, he took a part of who I was.

I didn't expect this kind of pain with my Uncle Howard. I didn't understand why somebody who I loved and trusted would inflict that kind pain on me. If my uncle could do this to me, I must have done something wrong and I deserved it. I was dirty, disgusting, and unlovable. That is what I believed as a four-year-old boy who had been raped, and I have

worked my whole life to change that belief about myself.

The most notable and terrifying moment of all of the abuse I endured came from my Uncle Howard during Thanksgiving at my home in Rosemont, Pennsylvania.

The whole family was there, and my mom, who is an incredible chef, cooked and baked so much food that to my four-year-old eyes, it looked as though there was enough food for 50 people. I remember the turkey was being carved, and the turkey leg was a coveted piece of the turkey in our family, so I let the whole table know that I wanted a turkey leg. One was already assigned to somebody in the family – I don't remember who – so there was only one left. Howard wanted it.

We were in the dining room. On one end, there was a swinging door to the pantry, and on the other, there was an open archway to the living room. Shortly after I had informed the table that I wanted a turkey leg, I left my seat to play with my toys in the pantry. My Uncle Howard followed me.

Today, I believe that what happened in that room was a power play. A show of dominance. Despite the family being on the other side of the door, he had no fear of being caught.

He grabbed the head of my penis between the flesh of his thumb and his finger. He pinched my penis, clenched his teeth and told me that he wanted the last turkey leg and that it was his. Then he threatened me. "If you tell anyone," he said, his teeth still clenched, "I'll kill you."

The scar from that pinch is still visible today.

I was terrified that night. His deep baritone voice while his fingers pinched me was so traumatising that it took over

a decade of therapy to heal from that moment. He got that turkey leg. I was so scared of my Uncle Howard, and I would do whatever he said.

"Let's go play in your room," he'd say. I would say, "OK." If I didn't agree, he'd kill me: that was what I believed as a child victim of sexual abuse.

UNCLE LARRY

My Uncle Larry was always someone who made me laugh. I was fond of him, and in many ways he reminded me of my dad because he was funny and charismatic. We would be goofing around together and before the abuse started, we had a lot of fun together. I wasn't scared of him, and never had a reason to believe that I should be.

One day, my Uncle Larry and I were playing in my room – this was after Howard had already started abusing me – and he invited me to play a game that he called the "Lollipop" game. And then he licked my penis, sodomised me fully and put his finger in my butt. It was so confusing because it was not as painful as what Howard had been doing to me, but it was still extremely uncomfortable. When he was doing this, he smiled at me with a sad look in his eyes, almost as if he was worried that he might be hurting me.

Imagine the confusion when I walked down the stairs after moments of abuse, only to watch my abusers hug my parents and grab a piece of pie, or a beer, and go about the day as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. I started to wonder if my parents knew what my abusers were doing to me and were okay with their actions. My Uncle Larry

would hug my mom and grab a piece of the pie that she had made. I'd come down from being abused and there would be smiles from my dad and mom at my abuser. It only added to my isolation and self deprecating beliefs about myself.

DIRTY, DISGUSTING AND UNLOVABLE

I thought I was being abused because I was dirty, disgusting and unlovable. By the time I was seven, I was being abused by Larry, Howard and Stewart on separate and multiple occasions. There was no fight at all because I thought they were supposed to do that to me. I thought this was supposed to happen because I deserved it.

Larry's son, my cousin Stewart, moved in with us after being honourably discharged from the United States Air Force. From what I understood, he was having trouble with drugs, but, just like with Howard and Larry, my parents never suspected that he would abuse me. His own parents wouldn't take him in, and so out of "love" for their struggling nephew, my parents opened our home to him.

I thought he was someone I could trust, although "trust" was a relative term for me at that point. He'd play football with me in front of our house, pick me up and hold me upside-down, make funny faces at me. He was very strong because he was in the military. He'd pick me up and spin me around and I can remember how much I would laugh when he did that.

When Howard abused me, I was surprised. When Larry abused me, I was surprised. When Stewart started abusing me, it was even more surprising because he was even nicer to

me than my Uncle Larry. My trust in adults was so fragile; my self-esteem was... My world felt like a dark and evil place because I believed I was dirty, disgusting and unlovable.

DISCLOSURE

I was prepared to accept my life for the awful, painful, anxiety-provoking experience that it was.

One day, Stewart called me up to his room in the attic for another session. As I walked up the stairs towards him, I saw my little sister exit his room. I slowed my pace, and as I continued to walk up the stairs towards her, she began to walk down the stairs towards me. As I got closer I could hear the repressed squeakiness of her sobs. I could see the flushed redness in her cheeks. As we locked eyes, I could see her tears. We stared at each other in the middle of the stairwell.

Up until that very moment I had believed that my abusers were hurting me, and ONLY me because I was dirty, disgusting, and unlovable. But my sister? My sweet, beautiful baby sister was the most beautiful person in my life, and I couldn't understand how or why anyone would hurt her.

It was in that moment that I finally realised that what my abusers were doing was wrong. My sister didn't deserve to be hurt, and maybe, just maybe, I didn't deserve to be hurt either.

I knew that my sister wouldn't say anything and I wanted my parents to know everything. I didn't know if it was just Stewart, or if Larry and Howard were also abusing my sister, but I wanted it to stop. My sister saved my life, because on that stairwell, she instantly shattered my belief that what was

happening was only happening to me, because I was dirty, disgusting and unlovable.

That night, I told my mom that Stewart had a secret club in his room where he and my sister did “Bad Things”.

My mom tried to get more information from my sister, who was scared to open up. Could you blame her?

To be fair, my mom wasn’t passive about this. For the period I was being abused, she became certain something was wrong. I was in the hospital a lot as I had rectal bleeding. She went to the school, spoke to the teachers, and made the school agree that no one faculty member was allowed to be alone with me. I always had to be accompanied by a minimum of two adults at school. She never expected her two brothers-in-law and her nephew to be the culprits.

Shortly after telling my mom about the “secret club”, I had an anxiety-provoked breakdown. I believed that my abusers could see every step that I took, and that they could hear every thought in my mind, and that they were already plotting my death simply for hinting about what was happening to my sister.

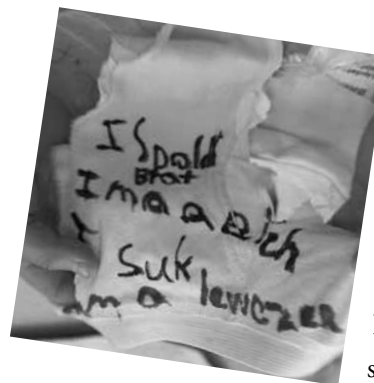
I grabbed a piece of underwear from my room, along with a Sharpie. I wrote on the underwear: “I spoiled brat”, “I’m a bitch”, “I suck”, “I am a loser”. I cut out two holes for my eyes, put it on my head and wore it like a mask. I then went downstairs – naked – with this mask on.

My sister, my mom and Stewart were in the kitchen. I grabbed a kitchen knife, put it to my neck and I started screaming at the top of my lungs.

So you can imagine this: my mom had just found out from her son that there might be abuse, she’s having a

discussion with Stewart, and then I come downstairs with this underwear mask, naked, and now I have a knife – a big knife – against my neck.

Stewart comes over and said, “Stop! You don’t want to do this.” I looked at him and screamed and screamed at him.



He left the room, packed his bags and left the house. He never came back. He left without saying anything. He just left.

SILENCE WAS BROKEN

It was that moment with my sister on the stairwell that set my eventual disclosure in motion, and it was my love for her that gave me the strength to break the silence.

My mom called the therapist I had at the time. He was on the phone with me, trying to calm me down. When the situation had been defused and I had put down the knife, the therapist told my mom, “I think you will need to go to a better therapist or even a psychiatrist. I’m not qualified for this. This is serious.”

My mom had a friend at the Children’s Hospital in Philadelphia, and she called him for help. We went to the hospital and he met me and my mom in the parking lot. He looked at me and said something to the effect of, “If you promise not to kill yourself, I’ll promise to find you a good doctor to talk to – he will help you feel better and you will be safe.”

He found us Dr. Herbert Lustig, the child psychiatrist who aided me in my healing process for over a decade. Dr. Lustig is one of my biggest heroes and is a huge reason why I am where I am today.

I was suffering from insomnia, which only aggravated my paranoia and suicidal thoughts. Dr. Lustig started me on medication that helped me to sleep, and once I was able to rest and reclaim stability, he was able to gain my trust and help me believe that I was safe in his office. I began to open up. I started by drawing a picture.



TALKING

After drawing multiple pictures, I began to talk about the abuse as well. The first time, I talked about my Uncle Larry and the “Lollipop” game. That was the first disclosure because he was the least scary of all. Then I talked about Stewart as he was the second scariest abuser. Then I talked about Howard.

I thought that the nightmare was over after I told Dr. Lustig and my parents the truth. They told me that it wasn't my fault and that what my abusers had done was awful, so I thought it was all over. Little did I know that for the next nine years of my life, I would be in and out of courtrooms, testifying against all three of my abusers.

KILLING MYSELF

I was asked to testify in court against all three of my abusers. It was a decision that I made because I didn't want my sister

to be hurt again, but also because with the new knowledge that what they did was wrong and awful, I was now angry and wanted justice.

Though I wanted to testify, it was extremely difficult for me, and sometimes the fear of my abusers' threats, particularly Howard's, was enough to push me towards suicide. I feared that death from my Uncle Howard would be a million times more painful than if I just jumped out of a moving car, which I did in an attempt to take my own life when I was just eight years old. Suffering from PTSD, extreme anxiety and depression, I would also cut myself and bang my head hard against the floor. I was really suffering. That is what people need to understand... the abuse and rape is painful, yes, but the psychological and emotional pain that follows is oftentimes worse than the abuse itself.

The prosecution process took nine years mostly because Howard had a four-lawyer defence team that was paid for by members of the congregation at Temple Emanu-El. They had the money to delay, delay and delay in the hopes of tiring me out before we could get to a trial. The trauma of those nine years was second only to that of being raped.

At the time, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, where my case was being prosecuted, did not have a Child Advocacy Center (CAC) to help me through the process.

Child Advocacy Centers provide a safe, child friendly environment where the child's official disclosure is filmed for later use by the prosecutors. The child is interviewed by a specially trained forensic interviewer, and while the interview is being conducted, it is being transmitted live on a monitor in another room where law enforcement, social services

and mental health professionals, as well as prosecutors are watching. If any one of these team members needed to ask a question of the child, they would do so through the forensic interviewer so that the child only has to tell their traumatic story of abuse to ONE adult, not four or five. Importantly, the child only has to tell their story ONCE because if anyone needed to hear it again, they could simply watch the video of that interview.

When I was a child, we did not have a CAC, so before I even reached the stand of my first trial, I had been asked by child protection services, physicians, detectives and prosecutors to retell and relive my story over and over again. It was incredibly traumatic to travel all over the county and tell my story to all these adults in all these strange buildings, to relive and retell the most horrific moments of my life.

When I look back, when I speak now on child advocacy and the work of the CAC, I realise the amount of trauma I suffered by not having a CAC. I became exhausted from telling my story again and again. Also, it limited the effectiveness of my therapy with Dr. Lustig, because we spent too much time working on keeping me stable while the prosecution process was underway. It was hard to really dig deep into some of the core issues because I was working so hard just to remain upright from the exhaustion of prosecution. The trial process slowed the healing process, without a doubt.

THE FIRST DOMINO TO FALL

My Uncle Larry was the first domino to fall. After he went to the police station and failed his polygraph test, he confessed

to what he had done, and also talked about his childhood and that he had been raped as a child by his older brother, my Uncle Howard. Larry's lawyer tried to get him to take back his confession but he ended up with 11 years in prison.

Stewart saw what happened to his dad and asked for a plea bargain shortly thereafter.

In my 2014 interview with Detective Ohrin, I learnt that Stewart talked about how he was abused by his father Larry. So we are starting to see a pattern here: multigenerational child sexual abuse. It should also be noted that after I told Dr. Lustig what had happened to me, my dad finally felt safe enough to reveal what had happened during his childhood: Larry and Howard had abused him in the very same way they abused me. This was a multigenerational child sexual abuse case that led all the way back to Howard.

UNCLE HOWARD

After successful trials against my Uncle Larry and my cousin Stewart, it was time to go after Howard but as stated earlier, Howard had four lawyers and an endless stream of money.

His defence fund was put together by members of Temple Emanu-El. The Temple Emanu-El chose not to believe my testimony, but instead backed their cantor, despite both my father and my Uncle Larry saying that Howard had abused them as children. When we went after Howard, Larry and my dad were going to testify against Howard in court. Howard appealed every court all the way to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, and it took a long time. They decided my dad and Larry couldn't testify.

This was because of the statute of limitations.¹ It's so fucked up, and something that I am working to change with the work that I am doing as a public speaker and with my film. There is no statute of limitations for murder and there should not be for rape!

My dad and my Uncle Larry's testimonies were nails in Howard's coffin, but once the Pennsylvania Supreme Court overturned the ruling that my dad and Uncle Larry could testify, those nails were gone. Still, I was ready to face Howard in court, and my testimony and the evidence was strong enough on their own.

Howard's defence team had one strong tactic: DELAY AT ALL COSTS. Early on, his lawyers asked to see my testimonials, all the various forensic interviews that I had been asked to give. If you ask an eight-year-old child after the most traumatic experience in his life – being raped – to tell his story again and again, and AGAIN, there will be slight discrepancies in each telling of the story, not only in the eight-year-old's testimony, but in the notes taken by the different men and women in the plethora of fields who needed my case details.

The lawyers said: "Sasha is an actor," or "Sasha had many concussions playing hockey," or "He's been in therapy for so long," so "Maybe Sasha isn't a credible witness because he's not right in the head," and they used these multiple interviews against me. The court saw through that tactic, but it ate at the clock and chiseled away at my childhood.

They had enough funds to appeal and delay until I was nearly 17 years old. This was how long it took from the time

I disclosed at age 8! Can you believe that? When they ran out of delay tactics, the Howard camp quickly asked for a plea bargain, as they did not want to go to trial.

Risa Ferman, the District Attorney who was prosecuting my case, said to me that she thought we could win, but she could not give me an exact date of when the trial would end, and with the knowledge of Howard's unlimited financial resources, it was made clear that it could take years for a conviction. Howard had the resources to appeal indefinitely.

I'll get to the point: we had been doing this for nine years. I wanted to move on with my life. The thought of having a trial with Howard, going through the same bullshit... This trial could have gone on into my twenties, and he had already taken so many years of my life.

My need for him to "pay" for what he did left me vulnerable because at the time I believed my happiness could only be achieved by a conviction. In my rage towards him, I wanted him to be in prison and to be raped in prison. I had so much anger. I could spend another four years and not get the verdict I wanted.

I decided that I wanted to move on with my life, without my happiness hinging on a court ruling that could not be guaranteed. Furthermore, I wanted to make sure that he did not get away with a clean record – I wanted the world to know he was a child sexual abuser. That he sexually abused me.

We reached a plea bargain. In exchange for dropping the two felony charges, Howard pleaded guilty to five counts of child abuse misdemeanours including indecent assault, terroristic threats, simple assault, corruption of minors and endangering the welfare of children.

¹ This forbids prosecution for offences that were committed more than a specified number of years ago. After the statutory period for the offence has run out, the alleged criminal cannot face criminal charges.

It should be noted that in many states, there is no such thing as a child sexual abuse misdemeanour. Pennsylvania was behind the times, and still is along with many other states in the US. For the record, indecent assault, one of Howard's crimes, means that an adult exposes a child (me) to bodily fluids.

To this day, as I travel the country speaking for reforms in child advocacy, including laws like the statute of limitations, I don't understand how indecent assault is simply a misdemeanour. And it's Pennsylvania state law! If you even pat a child the wrong way in the state of Texas, for example, you'd get 25 years minimum. If it had happened in Texas, it would have been a felony.

In any event, I got my day in court and I got to read my victim impact statement, in which I called Howard a coward to his face. It was a huge stepping stone in my journey to overcome the chains of my childhood abuse.

MOVING FORWARD

Just over a year after my final court appearance, I moved across the country to Bozeman, Montana, where I would study film production over the next four years, while also trying desperately to move on with my life. From age 4 to age 17, abuse was the primary focus of my existence, and so it took time to come down from the chaos I had lived through for the majority of my life.

I got a ton of help from my family and from Dr. Lustig, and despite all that had happened, I was functional, given every chance to move forward with my life. In my first

semester at Montana State University, I scored a GPA of 4.0, and I enjoyed the beauty of the Montana wilderness, fishing, hiking and camping whenever I could. What was difficult was making the transition from being a child victim to an adult [male] survivor.

SEXUAL INTIMACY

I'm a heterosexual male. Like any young adult, I was interested in exploring my sexuality, and while I was good at flirting, I was terrified of being intimate with a woman. As soon as a woman would express interest in me, as soon as there was an opportunity for intimacy, I'd start pushing them away.

When I was able to overcome that obstacle, I found that I was choosing toxic partners who were emotionally abusive. Those experiences with women and dating were painful, but an important part of my journey towards understanding what was still wounded inside of me – helping me to become aware of my pain, and work towards healing.

I've learnt that if something in my life is bothering me, whether it be a person or a situation, I have to look inward and ask: Why am I engaging with this person or this experience? Because if it's not serving me in a healthy and positive way, why should I engage? If you're in an abusive relationship, why are you choosing to be with that person?

Questions for oneself.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

EIRLIANI ABDUL RAHMAN is Executive Director of a not-for-profit group, YAKIN (Youth, Adult survivors & Kin In Need), which seeks to help child victims and adult survivors of child sexual abuse. She is also Director at the Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation founded by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate. In September 2015, the #FullStop to #childsexualabuse campaign that Eirliani led on behalf of Kailash Satyarthi reached 16 million people over six weeks. Eirliani edited Satyarthi's book *Will for Children*, a collection of essays on child labour, published in December 2016. She also sits on Twitter's Trust & Safety Council. Eirliani writes for the *Huffington Post* and *DailyO*, the online platform of the Indian Today Group, on the issues of child abuse and child online safety.

A graduate of the London School of Economics and Warwick University, Eirliani is an avid rock climber and mountaineer, and currently resides in Colorado, USA.

DR. DANIEL FUNG is a child psychiatrist at the Institute of Mental Health's Child Guidance Clinic and Chairman of the Medical Board of Singapore's Institute of Mental Health. He graduated from the National University of Singapore's Faculty of Medicine in 1990 and obtained a Masters of Medicine in Psychiatry in 1996 and was awarded the Singapore Psychiatric Association Book prize. Dr. Fung is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the Yong Loo Lin Medical School, Duke-NUS Medical School, National University of Singapore and Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, Nanyang Technological University.

He is currently the Vice President of the International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions and the Immediate Past President of the Asian Society of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions.

Since the start of his career, Dr. Fung has been involved with working with children who have been abused and is active with the Singapore Children's Society where he received their Platinum Service Award in 2017. As a Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator for various studies involving innovative clinical interventions on disruptive behaviour disorders and anxiety disorders, his research is supported by the National Medical Research Council and other funding agencies. Dr. Fung has been involved in over 10 national-level funded research grants. He has co-authored over 100 peer reviewed research papers (88), books (30) and book chapters (18). Dr. Fung is also the programme director of REACH (Response, Early interventions and Assessment in Community mental Health), a community-based mental health programme in Singapore.