

# FACSA Rally Against Child Sexual Assault

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SpeakingOut

**against Child Sexual Abuse, Inc.**

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## Rally Speaking Points

My name is Susan Suafoa-Dinino & I am the President/Founder of a non-profit organization called SpeakingOut against Child Sexual Abuse, Inc. (aka SpeakingOut). Based in Oak Ridge, TN, SpeakingOut was founded based on Proverbs 31:8... "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves...". I am here today SpeakingOut on behalf of all children who have ever been (child & adult survivors), are being or will be sexually abused.

The primary purpose of SpeakingOut is to raise awareness on Child Sexual Abuse in an effort to aid in the prevention of this horrific crime committed against innocent children of all ages. Our primary focus is on the home (parents & grandparents). Other focal points are churches, daycares/caregivers, schools & anyone who works with or around children. We approach the issue of Child Sexual Abuse in a proactive manner; Awareness & Prevention. We present this crime from a Parent's perspective & in some areas, a Survivor's perspective. It is my belief that this issue needs to be looked at from different perspectives; not just a legal perspective... child victim's perspective, perspective of adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, parent's perspective, grandparent's perspective, as well as the legal perspective.

### **America... a Safe Place for Children!**

That is the goal, which is why the Vision of SpeakingOut is to raise awareness all across America. In this country, so many other topics are considered worthy of being spoken of, most of which are great causes as well. However, Child Sexual Abuse is always put on the backburner. By no means does that mean that no one is working on this issue; just that as a whole across America, this issue is swept under the rug due to the sensitivity of the topic. No one really wants to believe that children are being molested, raped & exploited every single day across this country. America is known worldwide as the land of opportunity... the greatest country in the world. I ask you... Is it the greatest country for children being violated by Child Molesters/Pedophiles right here in the United States? In an effort to remove this issue/crime from the backburner, Speaking Out & every other individual & organization speaking here today is working to uncover this hidden crime & encourage society to no longer just sweep this issue under the rug.

Some of the ways in which SpeakingOut works to raise awareness...

- Informative Website @ [www.speakingout-csa.com](http://www.speakingout-csa.com)
- Monthly Newsletter (SpeakingOut News) via email distribution
- Speaking Engagements like this one
- Awareness/Prevention Workshops called "A Safe Place"

During our Workshops, we discuss 8 Major Topics of Discussion, which I will briefly touch on each today...

### **1) The Truth & Reality of Child Sexual Abuse**

a) Child Sexual Abuse is a very sensitive topic... there's no doubt. Yet, all you need to do is watch TV to see how so many other topics are okay to talk about openly in society. When animal cruelty and/or animal extinction is taken more seriously than the unthinkable acts committed against innocent children, this stops me in my tracks. Let me clarify... I am all for fighting against animal cruelty as well as many other needed & great causes. But when there are stricter laws against animal cruelty and/or those laws work better than the ones in place to protect children, something has gone horribly wrong. And then there are the topics forced upon us just by turning on our television sets, such as a pill to enhance a man's private body

part, women exposing themselves partially or completely on television all the time, sex on television, etc... This kind of thing is everywhere & accepted for the most part. Yet, when the words Child Sexual Abuse are mentioned, people want to turn off the TV or change the channel because it's such a horrible topic. What is wrong with this picture?

b) Common 1<sup>st</sup> Reactions to the Topic of Child Sexual Abuse...

- "I don't want to talk about it."
- "I don't even want to think about it."

Consider This... Children who are robbed of their innocence in this horrific way have no choice but to think about it & in most cases will not tell anyone. These children suffer alone! If we, as adults, cannot stand to talk about or think about what's happening to innocent children all around us, then what are the children supposed to do?

c) All forms of Child Abuse & Neglect are horrible. Physical Abuse is a very visible form of abuse that seems to be taken much more seriously than Sexual Abuse. In general, we are visual people. In most cases, Sexual Abuse is not seen, but I raise very strongly that it is just as damaging to a child's mind, body & soul. We've got to change this thinking in society.

We need to come together as Leaders in our homes, our churches & communities to address the issue of Child Sexual Abuse in America. In this country, when we set our minds to something, things happen. Child Sexual Abuse or rather the prevention of it, needs to become a priority in America. I want to start hearing Politicians talk about this issue & take it as seriously as they do a child's education. When did a child's education become more important than their safety & wellbeing? Both are very important, but only one of those issues gets addressed regularly. America, we need to make our country "A Safe Place" for children - the greatest country in the world for children!

## **2) What Child Sexual Abuse Is & Is Not**

At SpeakingOut, we believe than anytime someone does anything to a child or in front of a child for their own sexual pleasure, that is Child Sexual Abuse. Children are not here to be molested, raped & exploited. They are just that... Children!

There are many ways in which children are sexually violated. We will not cover that extensive list today, but I do want to touch on a few things...

- Sexual Assault (molesting, raping, etc...)
- Sexual Exploitation (child pornography, etc...)
- Internet (Pedophiles networking & preying on innocent children)
- Cell Phones (Sexting)
- Human Trafficking of Children (Globally & Domestically for Commercial Sexual Exploitation)

Children... referring to Minors (birth to 17 years of age at a minimum)

Why... Children of all ages have a lack of decision-making skills, knowledge & abilities. By nature, it is limited. The last part of a child's brain to develop is the part that deals with decision-making skills. To my understanding, this development continues until 21 or 22 years of age. Children/Minors should never be put in a position where they need to make a decision about whether or not they are being taken advantage of by child molesters/pedophiles. And for any adult stating the "child" consented, I'll say to you... "You know better." This lack of decision-making skills, knowledge & abilities of a child is exactly what child molesters/pedophiles take advantage of.

What CSA is Not... Children need love; the appropriate & healthy kind of love.

## **3) Signs & Symptoms of the Sexually Abused Child**

There is an extensive list in our website that we do not have time to cover today in this forum. What I will say is that it is possible that these same signs/symptoms could be indicators of other issues going on with the child. However, every parent/adult needs to know that Child Sexual Abuse could be the reason.

Reasons why children don't tell on their abusers (in most cases). To name just a few...

- Fear
- Confusion
- Being Threatened & manipulated
- Lack of Understanding
- To protect someone else (abuser, another family member, etc...)
- Etc... (for more info, visit our website)

#### 4) Sexual Abusers of Children

Possible factors that play a role with the Abuser in order for them to be able to do what they do to children...

- Control/Dominance/Power
- Learned Behavior
- Know little about appropriate/inappropriate boundaries
- Etc...

Typical Abuser... You cannot tell from looking at them or even conversating with them. For the most part, they look just like you & I. They come from all walks of life...

- Religious Denominations
- Ethnic Groups
- Social Classes
- Young/Old
- Marital Status
- Levels of Education
- Etc...

Couple of Profiles of Sexual Abusers of Children...

- 1) Man/Woman who is Married, Educated, Working & Religious
- 2) Man/Woman who is very immature & childlike
- 3) Etc...

What you have to remember... 95% of children who are sexually abused know their abuser & in many cases, love & trust their abuser.

Addressing Child Molesters/Pedophiles directly...

#### Questions:

- ↳ At what point did molesting, raping and/or exploiting children become okay in your world?
- ↳ How old were you?
- ↳ When did you first cross that line?
- ↳ What led up to that point?
- ↳ Were you abused and/or neglected as a child?
- ↳ Do you even remember or is it possible that you've repressed those memories?
- ↳ Do you even understand why you do what you do?
- ↳ How do you justify your actions?
- ↳ Or do you violate innocent children & then repress what you've done each time?

#### Comments

I strongly urge you to get answers to these questions. You can stop what you're doing. You can break the cycle. If you were abused as a child & think you are okay; yet you are sexually violating children, you are not okay... far from it. Go get some help. If you want so badly to be in control of something, get control of yourself. Stop the pervertedness. You are hurting children. I do not believe child molesters/pedophiles are born... they are made. This means you can be un-made. With help, you can break the cycle.

## 5) “The System”

Meaning any individual or group that is involved in the process when someone tries to get protection for a child that has been sexually abused. It also includes anyone involved in the process when someone is seeking justice... to stop the abuser; pay for their crime. Varies with each case, but may include Law Enforcement, Court System, Social Services, etc...

Most Child Sexual Abuse cases are never reported, but for the ones that are, most of these children are not being protected? I look at “the system” as a chain of events with many complex links. Visual... Link of Chain & a Broken Link in a Chain.



When “the system” works, it works well. But in more cases than not, a breakdown occurs. There are many reasons why this happens. Visit our website for more info. All it takes is one link (person/group/court/etc...) to not care or do their job for a breakdown to occur, even if everyone else involved is doing all they can. When this breakdown occurs, children are placed right back in the hands of their abusers... and in many cases, in the homes of their abusers. Far too often, the abusers are protected & the child continues to suffer. In addition, way more than anyone would like to believe, the non-abusive parent or parents (mothers in most cases) are persecuted & many times prosecuted for speaking up & trying to protect their child. Often times, these protective parents are accused of coaxing their child, being the vindictive spouse or ex-spouse, supposedly crazy, etc... This has got to stop. There is a better way... we must find it. America, what are we doing to these children? Children’s lives are at stake here.

When children are placed back in the hands & homes of their abusers, the horrific possibilities include (but are not limited to)...

- Continue being molested, raped and/or exploited
- Re-traumatized over & over again
- Taken from protective loves ones (also very traumatic) & have to learn to “survive” in a world with their abuser
- Becomes the “norm” & okay
- Brainwashing occurs (Even grown women who are battered can be controlled by their abusive husbands/boyfriends in many cases. How can we think it is any different for the most innocent of victims... children?)
- Protective of their abuser

On behalf of all non-abusive parents who have been unable to get protection for your child and/or have lost custody of your child to your child’s abuser... There is nothing worse than not being able to protect your child. Fix “the system”. Children are suffering because what is currently in place does not work in most cases. The protective parent or parents are left with no legal choices. They are being told to send their child back to the abuser knowing what is happening. Anything else in an effort to protect their child is considered illegal. America, let’s fix this, whether it means changing laws, more training for involved persons/groups, all of the above, etc... whatever it takes.

Unfortunately, our legal system is less about truth & more about who you know & money... in most cases. There is too much red tape & too many manipulative strategies used to “win” a case. However, when cases are won & a child is not protected... nobody has really won; especially that child. We’ve got to change this.

## 6) Message to Parents

The biggest mistake you can make as a parent is thinking... “That could never happen to my child.” Unfortunately, it does happen to countless numbers of children across America every single day.

My Advice to Parents...

- Never assume that just because you know where your child is & who they are with that this could not happen to them. Remember that 95% of children who are sexually abused know their abuser... and very possibly love & trust this person.

- Never assume that if this is happening or has happened to your child that they will tell you. Child Molesters/Pedophiles know how to silence children... even the most talkative child that cannot keep a secret can & most likely will keep this secret for many, many reasons.

You must raise awareness with your own child. Open up the communication line between yourself & your child on this specific topic. It is imperative for their safety. What you can do...

- ✓ Learn as much as you can about Child Sexual Abuse
- ✓ Talk, Talk, Talk to your Child
- ✓ Tell Others.. Help raise awareness

Factors to consider when talking to a child of any age...

- Age
- Maturity
- Personality

There are lots of resources out there to assist you in this, if needed. Every child is different & as a parent, you know your child better than anyone. Start by discussing appropriate/inappropriate touches. Start with the “swimsuit” area of their body with the understanding that there are many other parts of a child’s body that can be used & abused.

One Recommended Book Resource... “Joey Wants To Know” by Selena Smith @ [www.tatepublishing.com](http://www.tatepublishing.com)

A Mommy Kangaroo talking to her children about appropriate & inappropriate. For Parents to read with their little ones to start opening up the communication line between them & their children. It allows for you as a parent to go much more in-depth as you see age-appropriate.

Family Secrets...

- Believe your child/grandchild if they come to you & disclose abuse
- Do not downplay the issue/abuse no matter who is doing this to them
- Do not tell that child it was their fault because you cannot believe someone you know and/or trust could do this to them.
- If applicable, stop trying to protect the “family secret”. It is helping no one & in fact, allows for continued harm of the child. All you’re doing is enabling a generational issue to go on & on & on.
- Parents/Grandparents, do what it takes to break the cycle in your family, even if it has only just begun.

## 8) Message to Survivors

To child & adult survivors, it was not your fault! I don’t care who did this to you, how long they did it to you & even if you believe you consented by not saying “no“. You were taken advantage of by someone who was in authority of you. It’s as simple as this... your abuser gained access to you intentionally or already had access to you. Child Sexual Abuse is their issue that was inflicted upon you. There is no shame in it for you... the only shame should belong to your abuser. You did nothing to cause your abuse.

The Goal of SpeakingOut... for you to do more than just “survive”. Don’t keep it a secret any longer. Whether you’re a child or an adult at this time, Tell! Shout it from the rooftops. If you tell someone & they do not believe and/or help you, tell someone else. Keep telling until someone listens. Seek professional help if needed & as needed to avoid or at least minimize potential long-term affects from the abuse you endured as a child.

You were violated... your innocence robbed from you. But that does not mean that you have to remain a victim for the rest of your life. Get involved in the fight against Child Sexual Abuse... whatever that means for you. There is healing in being able to talk about what you had to endure & there is healing in making a difference so that other children may not have to go through what you’ve gone through. Everyone can do something to make a difference.

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Be sure to visit us @ [www.speakingout-csa.com](http://www.speakingout-csa.com)

**America... A Safe Place for Children! That is the Goal!**

**Thank you for being here today to Rally with us against the Sexual Abuse of Children!**

**Thank you FACSA for inviting SpeakingOut to be a part of this very important & much-needed event on behalf of children, as well as adults survivors in America.**