



END SILENCED ABUSE TELL SOMEBODY

by: Aleesha Barlow with Shalonda SJ Johnson
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"You are a perfect role model for turning pain into power." -Oprah Winfrey

Aleesha Barlow was molested by her maternal grandfather when she was a child. At the tender age of 6, she informed her mother and two aunts that their father was touching her inappropriately. They told her not to worry and made her promise to never tell anyone. Her mother and aunts vowed to confront him to put an end to the sexual abuse. They assured her that they had threatened to send him to jail if the abuse continued. Nevertheless, her grandfather persisted. At his insistence and as instructed, she did not tell anyone. Aleesha was forced to keep her painful secret from everyone, including her own father.

Aleesha felt helpless and never shared her pain with anyone again as her past experiences had proven that no punishment would come to her grandfather. As time passed, her family never discussed the topic again. When Aleesha reached adulthood, she finally had enough courage to tell her father about the abuse before he sadly passed away.

Telling her story to her father and the world was the most important step to Aleesha reclaiming her life! Ninety-five percent of molestation happens by a family member or a close friend, hence the need for parents to educate their children, and let them know to tell somebody until something is done.

Twenty years later, motivated by the words of her father, Aleesha created Tell Somebody, Inc., an organization that works toward ending child abuse and silenced abuse of any kind. The Tell Somebody movement is about bringing awareness to parents that sexual abuse can and does happen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aleesha Barlow, creator of the #TellSomebodyMovement, is a survivor of sexual abuse. At the tender age of 6, she told her mother and aunts that their father was inappropriately touching her. Not only was Aleesha forced to keep the abuse from the police and her father; the abuse was allowed to continue. Now twenty years later, Aleesha and her young daughter, speak at schools educating young children about their bodies and letting them know to tell somebody if they're being hurt. Her ultimate goal is to give strength to other survivors to tell their story to foster healing.

Shalonda R. Johnson, professionally known as SJ, is originally from Hampton, VA. Since the age of fifteen, she has aspired to become a writer and actress. Upon graduation, she left Virginia to study acting at Temple University's extensive Theater Program. In 2007, she received her BA degree in Theater; and has been pursuing her dreams of writing and acting ever since. Her recent works include national commercials for Dr. Miracle's hair care products, Gerber, 5-Hour Energy, Five Below, Beyoncé's video "The Best Thing I Never Had," and her debut novel *Redemption & Repercussions*.