



Adult Survivors of Child Abuse (ASCA) Global Newsletter

Summer 2015

In this issue, we are proud to present an inspirational life journey of an adult survivor of child abuse from Canada, called "The story of Chiquitta: Suffering in silence no more".



*Long Beach, CA
ASCA Support Group est. 2015*

Diane Whitney details her experiences with hypnotism, and how the understanding received from ASCA members has helped with her challenges of recovering her repressed memories, through an excerpt from "Blackout: My journey with repressed memory and PTSD". Carlina authors an article, detailing her healing journey and how she was inspired to translate the ASCA materials, for the Spanish speaking community.

We are also glad to share information of a new virtual support group meeting. Through access through internet or phone, a real ASCA support group is now available to virtually anyone in the world.

An appeal to help accelerate and increase the reach of the ASCA program to survivors who are suffering is written by Dr. Patrick Gannon.

Original poetry, titled "Epitaph for the journal of my life" is written by TMC volunteer outreach director, Echosaisis.

TMC and the ASCA Program continue to grow worldwide with over 45 meetings. We need you to help us reach more survivors. Please consider volunteering by giving back in any way that feels right for you. We also encourage everyone to contact us via: info@ascasupport.org

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The Story of Chiquitta: Suffering in Silence No More

This is a true and personal story of my life from victim to survivor. Not everyone knows my story, therefore, I shall be known as Chiquitta.

My Childhood and the Inside Abuse

I was born in Edmonton, Alberta. My parents came from Guyana, South America. They came to Canada for a better life: Acid attacks were occurring in their homeland. My mother and my father have an age difference of 13 years; with my father being a lot older. This fact gave way to extreme jealousy on my father's part. My mother was a housewife who later worked at a bank. My father was a High School teacher. I have 2 brothers and 1 sister; I am the eldest daughter. This was a curse for me: my parents were extremely strict with me and rules had to be followed. My brothers and my little sister were given the rights and freedom to do whatever they pleased. The teachers would call me "a pleasure to teach" due to the fact that I was a quiet student. In reality, I was shy and scared to speak up due to an abusive home life. My father was an alcoholic: putting liquors in his morning coffee, drinking a case of beer during the week, and a bottle of rum on the weekend. This routine binge drinking led to my mother packing her bags on Fridays to go to my grandmother's house to seek refuge, leaving us kids behind. My mother would return to false promises made by my father once again; until the next time, which was every weekend. Seeing the police was a regular occurrence at my house, as was talk of divorce. My father would take the boys and my mother would take the girls. When my father drank alcohol, he became a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde monster. I grew up with fear and insecurity. I was mentally, emotionally, and physically abused by all family members in my household. My father would take off his leather belt to threaten to beat me, or my mother would take a wooden handled paddle in her handbag when we went out of the house just in case she needed to use it on me. Why me? Not the other siblings? Later, my mother told me she had no choice but to "put up" with my father's abuse. Where was she to go with no job, no money of her own, and 4 children to look after? In retrospect, she had my

grandmother, but there was a bad stigma connected with it. People would talk. My father demanded perfection everywhere. Outside looking in, we looked like a perfect family; but little did the public world know of our living hell. School was the only stability in my life. I had no friends and was petrified to make any. I never knew what was waiting at home for me.

My Childhood and the Outside Abuse

Back then, I ventured outside of my house in search of a peaceful, happy, normal life. Instead, I was further abused: I was sexually molested by my family doctor, my cousin on my father's side of the family, and my cousin on my mother's side of the family. The cousin on my mother's side of the family sexually molested me when I was 11 and 12 years of age. When I was 12 years old, he vaginally penetrated and raped me. I still remember the sight of blood running down my thighs. I fought so hard, but it wasn't enough. What seemed like an innocent game of hide and seek was actually his opportunity to touch and hurt me. After he had his "turn" with me, his friends would have their "turn". I had nowhere to go for help. I wanted to call the police and put my cousin in jail, but with the abuse going on inside my own house, my father would be the one behind bars. However bad my situation was, it would have become even worse for my mother, my siblings, and I. All the abuse took place in the dark, which up until today scares me to death.

My Teenage Years and Abuse Everywhere

By the time I became a teenager, I developed anorexia and bulimia. First I would starve myself, and then "pig out," and then relieve myself with either extreme exercise or laxatives, never throwing up. This vicious cycle started at the same time that I was being sexually molested by my cousin on my mother's side. Later, during my senior year of high school, I was bullied and physically threatened by a girl who did not like me on sight because I was not white skinned: she was mixed race of African and English and she was being bullied herself by others. She took out her anger and hatred on me. It so happened that her mother was an associate of my uncle's in the real estate business. My uncle intervened, the girl apologized to me, and later she was transferred to another school.

My Adult Years

After my teenage years, I started associating with the "wrong crowds" of people. I became promiscuous, started drinking alcohol, and smoking marijuana in order to escape reality and cope with all the abuse that was going on inside my house. It was also during this time in my life

that I had been diagnosed with anxiety and depression. The depression led to several suicide attempts. When I was in my 20s I was still dealing with the abuse at home. I got pregnant, had an abortion, and later ran away from home. I was hoping to never return. I was gone from home for about a week; when I realized that I had an orthodontic appointment. That is when I saw my parents. They started chasing after me. I went home with them only to be made false promises, just like my mom was made by my dad everytime he drank alcohol and raised hell. Too many times where "I am sorry" and "we will change" was just talk. Nothing did change. Later that week I came home from a party to find my parents waiting up for me. I was then choked and almost strangled to death by my father. If not for my brothers rescuing me like they used to rescue my mother, I would be dead. I then moved out of my house to my own apartment in Edmonton, where I felt free. I started binge drinking and I would invite men over to have sex with me and get drunk. On occasion, I would drink so much that I would black out. The next morning on one such occasion, I realized that something sexual had occurred, with used condoms around my bed, and ropes tied to the bed posts and to my wrists. I had been gang raped vaginally and anally. The condoms, excruciating pain, blood and soreness was the proof.

The Big Move

I moved from Edmonton to Toronto, for there was little work for me in Alberta, and jobs aplenty in Toronto for secretaries. My parents went to B.C. to be near my older brother. I had no choice but to leave Alberta and my past there. I was not going to B.C. with my parents; I had endured enough abuse as it was. My sister moved with my parents. My remaining younger brother stayed in Alberta. Not only did I find a job and a place of my own, but I found my future spouse. I got married, and a couple of years later, unfortunately I had a miscarriage. I never wanted to have children when I got married, but never knew why. Three years after the miscarriage I had a daughter, then two years later I had a son. My children are the lights of my life that give me the will to live when at times it feels like there is none.

Last Chance

I then cheated on my husband and had several affairs, both in person and on the internet. Enough was enough. My husband and kids were on the verge of leaving me and my abusive behaviors behind for good. Something had to change. I had to break the cycle of abusive behavior.

Today

Thanks to therapy, over the years, I have managed to almost completely heal from all the abuse that I had suffered. The best decision that I made was to move away from Edmonton and start life over again in Toronto. As far as my male cousin is concerned, he got married, became abusive to his family, and is currently wheelchair bound in a drug/rehab centre in Alberta. Karma says "what goes around comes around"; for all that has happened to him, he truly deserves. My father never apologized for his abusive behavior to any of us. He is an old man now. Chances are that he never sought help and he never will. I will never have the precious gift of virginity to give my spouse, for it was taken from me. Thanks to therapy and support of other incest survivors, I have hope, joy and life. The only good lessons that I have learned about my past is what not to do, to not perpetuate the wrongs done to me, and how to do right with family and friends. Yes, I have had my ups and downs, but for the most part, it is positive. I thank God for giving me such a normal life now, that I do pinch myself from time to time and wonder: "is this real?" I could go into detail with so many life events to share, but for now, this is The Story of Chiquitta. Thanks for reading my story. Just know that if I can go from being a victim to a survivor, anyone can!

Virtual ASCA meeting? Smartphone?

#TheresAnAppForThat

Virtual ASCA meetings are connecting survivors from all over the world. A meeting place of support for any adult child abuse survivor with a phone or internet connection, The Morris Center has provided this unique and accessible program just within several recent months. I am glad to convey I have been one of the participants and co-facilitators of this powerful virtual meeting. Adult child abuse survivors from as far as Australia are able to provide and receive support with peers in the USA and even the United Kingdom. Often where no local ASCA meetings are available, Virtual ASCA meetings follow the same format and meeting guidelines as in-person ASCA meetings. The web/video conference service we currently use for our virtual meetings is called Zoom. For smart-mobile device users, Zoom even comes with a free app compatible with both iOS and Android. This means in a matter of: *tap, tap, tap*: You could easily experience a virtual ASCA meeting, just like that! Zoom even features built in webinar and instant messaging. The Virtual ASCA meetings are held on Saturdays (United

States). Virtual ASCA meeting attendees receive prior log in information and instructions in order to participate in this support meeting.

The Saturday virtual ASCA meeting is sponsored by The Morris Center. It is a closed meeting (by invitation ONLY).

If you are interested in attending this meeting, or want to start your own virtual meeting in the future, please send an email to info@ascasupport.org with "VIRTUAL MEETING" in the subject line.

BLACKOUT: My Journey With Repressed Memory And PTSD" an excerpt, by Diane Whitney, M.S.W., J.D.

With my relationship with my partner now over, I resolved to put my energy into sorting out my childhood issues once and for all. Since drinking and smoking pot had enabled me to suppress emotions I didn't want to face, I knew I needed to start by throwing away those crutches. My therapist made two other suggestions. First, she suggested that I see a hypnotist since having no clear early memories of my early years was making progress very difficult. Second, she suggested that I look into a San Francisco-based support group called Adult Survivors of Child Abuse (ASCA). I immediately agreed to do both.

My first ASCA meeting was informative before it even started, in that I found myself looking disapprovingly at the other people in the room. Before any of them even opened their mouths, I realized that I was full of judgment, seeing them as malingerers and attention seekers. Why were these women and men in their twenties, thirties and forties sitting around talking about their childhood and its effects on them? Why could they not just "get over it" and get on with their lives? Clearly I had bought into the prejudice that is commonly directed at adult abuse survivors. It made me realize that, on some level, I must be feeling that same disdain toward myself.

In 1994, the concept of post traumatic stress, though not new, was not the common, even overused, diagnosis it would soon become. It was mostly applied to war veterans who had witnessed terrible events and who had lived their lives in fear, for long periods of time. It was difficult, if not impossible, for non combatants to understand what that was like. Likewise, I realized, it was impossible for anyone who was not raised in a scary household to understand what that experience was like. If grown men and women could be permanently traumatized by the terrors they experienced in war, how could young children not be scarred for life from having been terrorized? Terrorized not on a battlefield but often in their own homes and by the very people who were supposed to protect them? It soon became apparent to me that ASCA men and women were not just hanging around feeling sorry for themselves. On the contrary, most were full of courage and working hard

every day to live a better and healthier life. Some were now parents themselves and urgently trying to break the cycle of abuse that is so often generational. Others, like me, were just trying to have healthy adult relationships that were free of torment and fear.

For a minority of us, there was the additional challenge of having no conscious memories of exactly what had happened to us, nor any witnesses to substantiate our experience. If post traumatic stress was still a relatively new concept, repressed memory was even more misunderstood and controversial at the time. The basic principle was that people could completely block out events that were too traumatic to digest, akin to developing amnesia. If the trauma occurred at a very early age, it was thought that the brain was simply not well formed enough to even be able to process what was happening. One famous lawsuit on the subject involved the testimony of a woman against her father when she started to remember, twenty years after the fact, that she had seen him molest and murder her childhood friend. The jury in that case was convinced and convicted her father but there were many other instances when recovered memories were not believed.

Although there may have been rare cases of implanted false memory, I knew from my own experience that repressed memory was a very real phenomena. The hypnotism my therapist recommended was supposed to help in that regard but I found it a slow and frustrating process. I was still pretty much stuck with vague, shadowy memories, strong impressions and intense feelings. Feelings that were growing stronger, now that I was no longer dulling them with drugs and alcohol. It certainly helped me to hear, from multiple sources, that intense emotions and behavioral reactions were, in fact, a form of memory. It also helped enormously to become a part of the ASCA community. Once I let go of my initial judgments, I felt more at home and understood in ASCA than I had ever felt anywhere before in my life.

ASCA'S volunteer Spanish translator: Carlina shares

When I was asked why I was taking on the responsibility of translating the ASCA material into Spanish, the first thought that came into my mind was the fact I usually take on responsibilities that I believe will create an impact on the lives of others.

This, however, is more than just taking a responsibility.

When I came to the US, I was in a very comfortable financial and professional position back in my country of origin. I had obtained my degree as a psychologist 15 years ago and had, for the most part, my life figured out. I already had built a career, had a great job, and had made enough money to have a stable financial freedom.

However, there was a turn of events. My mother with whom I have had many conversations about the experience of being sexually abused by her boyfriend as a child until I was 13 years old, decided to go back in the relationship with him one

more time. Needless to say, I was devastated. I experienced feeling I was nothing and had no place in her life.

I was really confused and hurt. I didn't know what to do. That's when I decided to come to NYC to build a new life. I was certain that if I stayed in my country of origin I would more likely kill myself. The decision was not easy. In fact, since then nothing has been easy.

Coming to a new country and not having the opportunity to practice without going back to school has been very difficult at every level, but especially financially. If that was not enough, I was mourning and in a lot of pain because of the losses related to my family and my life. I was really overwhelmed, ashamed, and hurt.

That's when I found ASCA. I do not have words to describe the relief I felt when I found this space where I could speak my truth out loud. ASCA is where I was not pretending nothing happened and I was in the US just because it's exciting. I was able to open my soul and stand for who I am.

This is the reason that moves me to do this work. There are people out there, eager as I was, to talk in a safe place about their struggle. However, sometimes they are not able to because of a language barrier. They may not even be able to find out about it. Not to mention, the emotional work is deeper because it is more real to the survivor when we speak in our mother tongue. Don't get me wrong: to have the space to do it at all is a blessing, but being able to do it in Spanish allows myself and others to reflect in a more profound level. That's why I firmly believe survivors can benefit greatly by doing this work in our mother tongue.

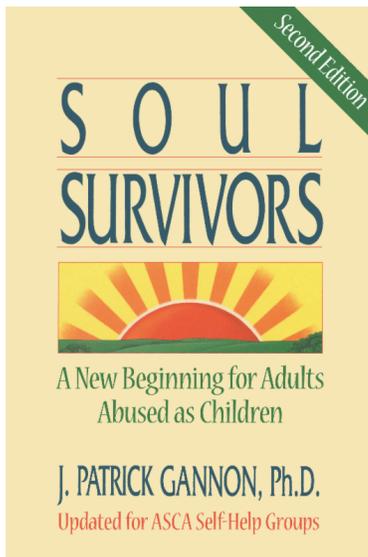
I am just blessed I am alive and I can be of service. I have taken a stand in this cause in order to help others, the same way many others have taken a stand for me. If you would like to join me, let me know. Everyone is welcome to support this cause.

In solidarity,
Carlina

Calling All Book Reviewers!

Soul Survivors: A New Beginning for Adults Abused As Children

Was republished last year as an eBook and is available through Amazon as a Kindle book and through Smashwords in all other eBook formats. As you probably know, the ASCA recovery program is based on the step program described in *Soul Survivors*. As such, it serves as the "big book" for the ASCA program.



This is the second edition of Soul Survivors and includes the integration of the ASCA program into the three stage, 21 step model. The edition also includes updates on neuroscience research, attachment studies, new techniques (such as EMDR) that are effective tools for processing trauma and a host of other additions that builds on new thinking about trauma and recovery over the last twenty five years since the original edition was published in 1989.

The revision was long overdue but we finally did it. Several ASCA members contributed to the inclusion of the ASCA program materials as well as tips for using the steps in ASCA meetings. We are currently at work on creating a "print on demand" format that will allow the book to be published as a softcover book.

But here's the dilemma: we need help to promote and market the Soul Survivors eBook which also creates an opportunity for promoting the ASCA program as well. Ebooks need help to get noticed in the vast online book universe. Without it, books get lost. One way to do that is to get interested readers to write reviews of the book and bring attention to what the new edition has to offer. So, we are putting out a request for ASCA members worldwide to write reviews and post them on Amazon and Smashwords, including anywhere else in the social media universe so we generate interest in both the book and ASCA.

Reviews can be as short or long as you wish. What works best is writing about what you got out of reading the book. Stories of how you use the steps to further your recovery offer helpful tips to others who are also in recovery. Be as creative as you wish and personal as you wish.

Thanks so much for your help!

Patrick Gannon

Here are the links for both formats:

[AMAZON KINDLE](#)

[SMASHWORDS](#)

May 26, 2010 - 1:17 p.m.

Where is the little boy
lost down the lane
without anyone out to find him
lost alone
scared in the dark
unknown before him
begins the creation
of the strength within him
to grow into something
he vowed at that moment

and now the grown man
looking back at the little boy
wonders how he is meeting
the little boy's expectations.

Join the Newsletter Team

Gain valuable experience in newsgathering and support a worthwhile charity! The Morris Center is looking for news editors and regular contributors for its global online newsletter in support of the Adult Survivors of Child Abuse program, <http://ascasupport.wordpress.com>. See <http://www.ascasupport.org> for more information on the program. Anyone interested please contact the editor-in-chief at ascanewseditor@gmail.com.

Send in Submissions

Please submit: your own stories; photography, artwork, poetry and other self-expression; book reviews, and upcoming events to ascanewseditor@gmail.com



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